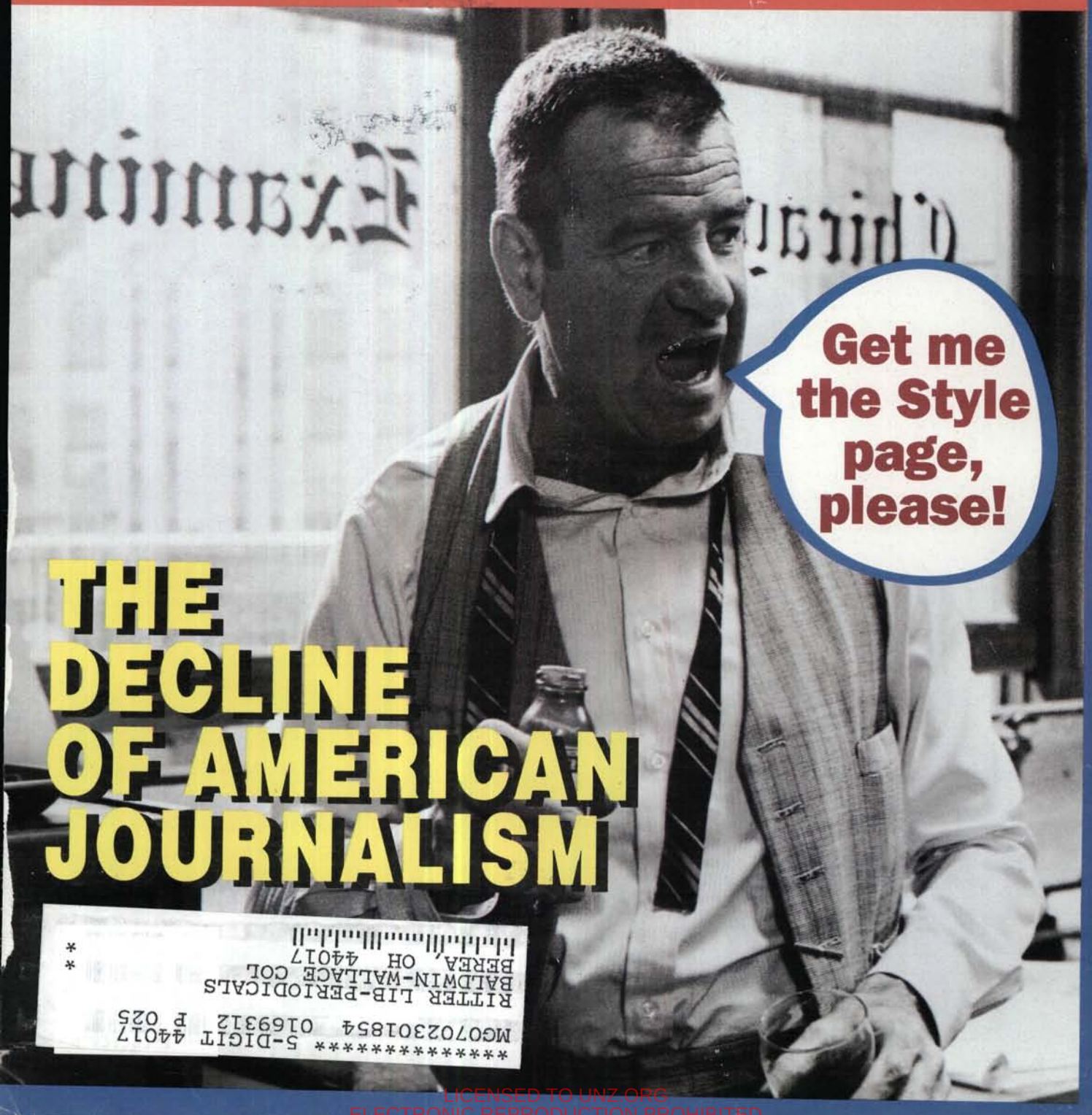
une 21, 1993 49145 $2.95 VOL. 45 NO. 12

WFB ON CLINTON

The Decline of American Coffee — by Digby Anderson

NATIONAL REVIEW



THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM

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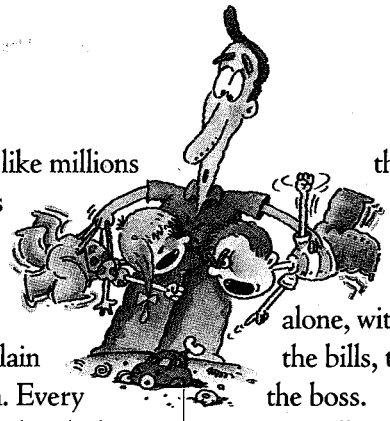

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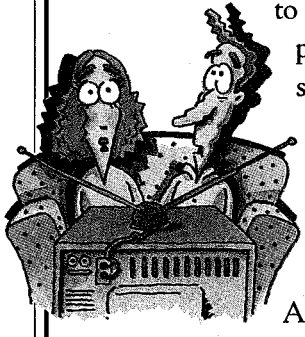

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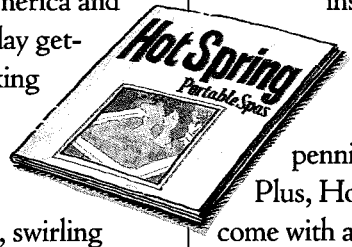

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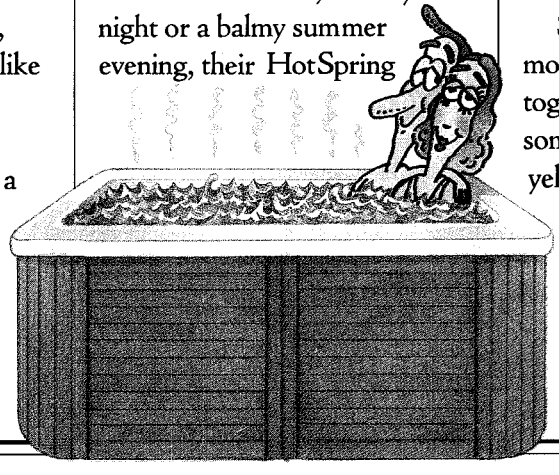

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NATIONAL REVIEW

JUNE 21, 1993 VOL. XLV, NO. 12

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The Strange Death of the American Newspaper
James W. Michaels reveals how the newspaper industry committed suicide—by monopoly.

PC Comes to the Newsroom
Daniel Seligman presents the new standards for what's "fit to print." . . . **James MacGuire** considers stories that don't get followed up.

The Media Elite Revisited
Journalists refused to believe the Rothman/Lichter media-bias studies, but, notes **Ted J. Smith III**, the evidence continues to roll in.

Hold the Arts Page
Hilton Kramer decries the willful triumph of ignorance. . . . **Samuel Lipman** presents a case in point.

Beltway Journalism
Terry Eastland lays down the rules of Washington reporting.

The Rise of Style
Joseph Sobran looks at the most bias-friendly—and fastest-growing—part of the paper.

***It Didn't Start with* Dateline NBC**
When it comes to phony footage, **Walter Olson** shows, the peacock is still in third place.

Media, AIDS, and Truth
Why is AIDS coverage so distorted? The missionary impulse, suggests **Michael Fumento**.

The Breeding Ground
Stephanie Gutmann profiles Columbia Journalism School, home of New Journalistic Man.

The Media & Anita Hill
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The Audit Bureau

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LETTERS

Old-Fashioned Modernism

I read with interest A. J. Bacevich's thought-provoking article, "Gays and the Military Culture" [April 26]. He argues, interestingly but a bit too forcefully, that modern military life is less communal and intimate than is commonly believed and that, therefore, the "close quarters" objection to integration of homosexuals is largely an artifice, or at the very least of diminished relevance.

What prompted my reaction, you see, is that I read this article while aboard USS *Nimitz*, steaming in the Arabian Gulf. The extremely close living quarters that Mr. Bacevich all but dismisses as a thing of the past are a hard reality for the vast majority of the five thousand men on this ship—as they are on every ship in the Navy. The denseness of the living arrangements must be seen to be believed. Typically, forty to sixty men live, with all their personal possessions, in a space the size of a small two-car garage (I do not exaggerate). Even junior officers might live with eight men in a room the size of an average kitchen. The showers and heads are of comparable dimensions. Let no one tell you that close living and lack of privacy are a thing of the past. (I admit that to so state would be overstating Mr. Bacevich's case.)

Would the injection of sexual tensions and politics into such an environment affect morale to a level at which fighting effectiveness would be degraded? Such questions are for better (and more senior) men than myself to answer. But there is enough intentional deception afoot about the facts of the matter without having *NR* add to the problem, however unintentionally.

J. D. Baldwin
Lieutenant, USN

Though my direct acquaintance with the military harks back to another era, I can readily believe that A. J. Bacevich is correct in asserting that members of America's contemporary armed forces have lost what used to be called the "military spirit"—and I say, Good riddance! For Mr. Bacevich to lament the demise of that "spirit" and, furthermore, to suggest that its loss threatens real fighting capability is not only wrong, it is absurd.

The U.S. Army of the early 1960s, which presumably epitomized the "military spirit," was—to put it mildly—out of sync with most draftees and reservists within its ranks (I cannot speak for the regular Army). Indeed, the culture gap was so great between those in authority and those in the ranks as to render the Army of that period dangerously inadequate with respect to its only *raison d'être*—its ability to defend the nation, to fight and win.

A distinctive military culture—one dominated by the "military spirit," separate and elitist—historically may have worked to help forge an effective fighting force. But by the mid Sixties, it had ceased to function. To put it bluntly, many of us in the ranks were better educated, more widely traveled, and more sophisticated (read: knowledgeable) than the officers and non-coms who gave the orders. The post–World War II generation of young Americans, perhaps unlike a majority of those who served at earlier periods, were not fresh off the farm. To have accepted the mindless, petty (and often perverse) techniques regularly used to inculcate the "military spirit," one would have had to check all self-respect at the door—hardly an attribute of an effective warrior.

Mr. Bacevich may regret the passing of the rigors of a military "class" system (his word); but, I submit, this system was simply getting in the way of the job.

Robert J. Griffin Jr.
Silver Spring, Md.

I would like to point out that the qualities Mr. Bacevich cites as being desirable and even necessary in the character of individuals of the military establishment were at one time much more prevalent in the society at large. Discipline, orderliness, humility, self-effacement, and perseverance were common characteristics of admirable individuals in almost any calling. It would not be surprising to find them in abundance in the military of the past. It would be surprising to find them in similar abundance in almost any profession today. Although I don't want to imply a total loss of positive traits in today's professionals it certainly can be argued that there has been a significant dilution, the solvent being the materialism brought about by widespread economic growth and prosperity. I would go so far as to say that modern liberalism is a direct product of this dilution. It is the attachment to the physical comforts born from prosperity that creates a society that craves increased personal freedoms while seeking to escape the tedium of responsibility.

There is an ancient saying that tells us that the student always gets the teacher he deserves, and vice versa. I suppose that the same must be true of societies, military establishments, and soldiers.

Michael I. Robinson
Wyoming, Pa.

It must have been hard for a sophisticated guy like Mr. Griffin to take orders from those who were his intellectual and social inferiors. Not to worry: if present trends continue, the United States will soon have a military establishment more to his liking. Little of traditional military culture will remain to "get in the way of the job." But the "job" itself is changing, as "peacemaking" (however defined) bids fair to supplant deterrence as the chief task of military forces. The effectiveness of forces that have abandoned traditional military culture if they are assigned tasks such as imposing order in Bosnia remains to be seen.

I have no doubt that Lieutenant Baldwin's description of the "close living and lack of privacy" on the Nimitz *is accurate. Yet the Navy's senior leaders appear to think that the problem is less than insurmountable, viz., the recent decision to remove barriers that have excluded women from serving on such ships.*—AJB

Battle over Britain

Tired as one gets of Richard Langworth's misrepresentations of one's argument ["Letters," June 7], it is yet again necessary to correct him; I do sometimes wonder if it is that he cannot understand my book, or whether he simply has not read it.

In the first place, as his own responses to my book show, it is not possible to review it properly from the press controversy. *Pace* Langworth, it is simplistic to assert (with no evidence) that for Britain to have withdrawn from the *military* conflict with Germany would have resulted in "Nazi world hegemony." It may be true that the Soviet victory over the Nazis was a close-run thing, but will he explain to me how Britain's military intervention in 1941–42 (the crucial years) helped Russia in any way? The answer, to anyone who knows more history than

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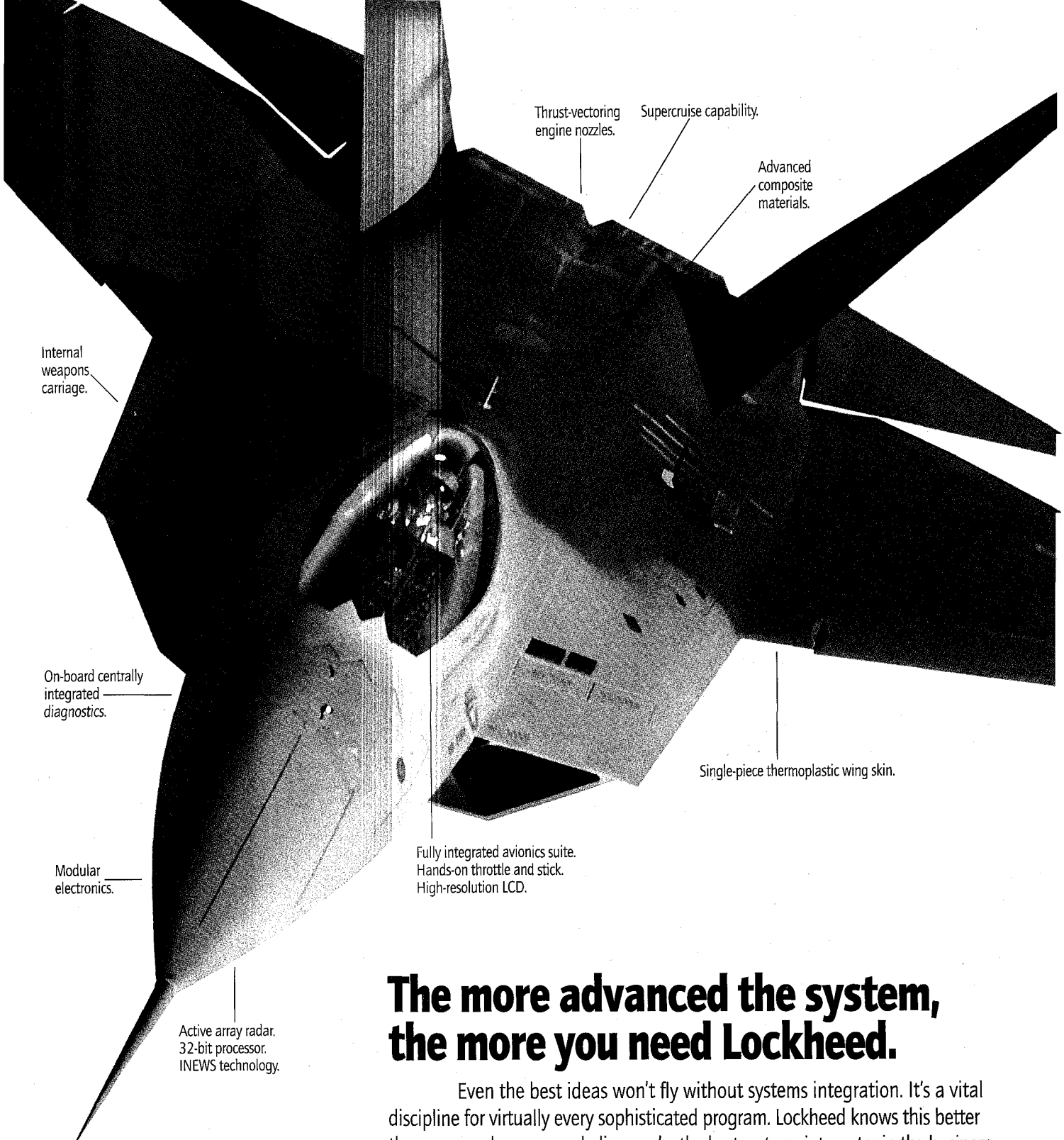
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hagiography, is that it was the American and British economic aid to the Soviets which helped them in these years—and that aid could have been provided without Britain's being in the war.

Britain's staying in the war completed her economic and strategic subordination to America, it added to the number of ruins for which Americans visit Britain, but it did nothing to help Russia or Britain herself. Of course Langworth will not accept this; it makes it plain just how purblind his hero, Winston Churchill, was and how the world of 1945 was, as Harry Hopkins had hoped in 1941, the "New Deal internationalized." As a Conservative I deplore this. As the product of a society which was, in its origin, a revolt against legitimate authority, Langworth evidently has a problem understanding conservatism. Neville Chamberlain understood what neither Langworth nor his hero comprehended—that only Democratic internationalism and Soviet hegemonic plans could prosper if Britain once more became involved in a world war.

Hitler would have been stopped, as he was anyway, by the Soviets. If the British and Americans had confined their aid to economic assistance and eschewed even "Overlord," the Soviet victory would have been purchased at a price which would have left that "evil empire" so exhausted as to be a menace to no one. Langworth needs to reassess the effect of the British war effort and to look at Roosevelt's objectives; if he does so he may even see that for all its heroism, World War II was a victory which led to the Cold War. There was nothing much in it for the British—and certainly nothing that could not have been achieved at a less expensive price. Langworth does neither himself nor his hero any favors by his half-baked notions. He should stick to running expensive guided tours of Churchill's England.

John Charmley
Fulton, Mo.

Garden State Conservatism

I agree with Brian Robertson ["A Model for Clinton?" May 24] that New Jersey would be better off without the $2.8 billion in higher taxes Democratic Governor Jim Florio heaped on the state three years ago. The state's economy flatlined shortly after the tax hike, and despite signs of an unsteady recovery elsewhere, New Jersey is still in recession.

Unlike the Governor's political condition, however, New Jersey's economy is responding to treatment. So relax, Mr. Robertson, the prognosis is good.

The medicine the Republican legislature prescribed last year—a $600-million sales-tax cut—is working just fine. Retail and real-estate sales have picked up, along with state revenues, and consumer confidence is on the upswing. For the first time in four years, state government is on steady fiscal ground. This is no miracle, either. It is the work of determined fiscal conservatives in the legislature, who, for the first time ever, fashioned a smaller state budget than the one before it.

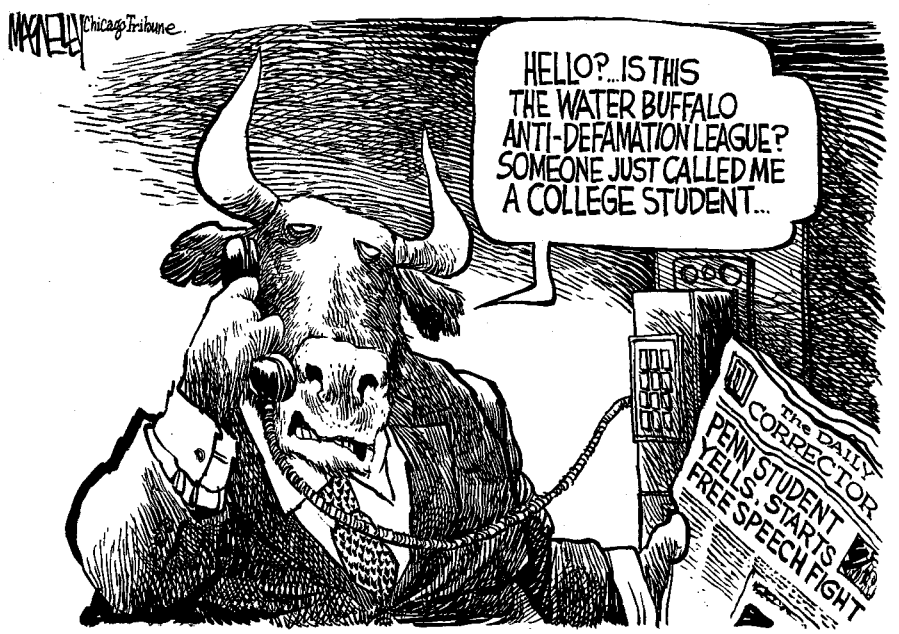
It is important to note that we accomplished all of this in the context of a $1.5-billion budget shortfall. Not only did we produce the largest tax cut in state history and cut Florio's wish list by $1 billion, but we actually balanced the books for the first time in four years. We did this with overrides of liberal Governor Florio's veto! Ronald Reagan, eat your heart out.

Conservative enough? Our new health-care reform law is enough to make Hillary Clinton sick. We cut subsidies for hospitals, eliminated price fixing, and slashed regulations, all of which has already forced providers to compete on the basis of quality and cost.

Our agenda for the current session is just as ambitious. Reform of our state's choking environmental laws and tax cuts for business top the list. Tort reform is a strong possibility, and a tax cut for the middle class is gaining momentum. Mr. Robertson's impatience with the pace of change notwithstanding, we'll put our credentials up against those of any group of Republicans in the country.

The fact is that we have done more than just rail against high taxes and the expansion of government. We are putting tough-minded conservative principles into practice here in New Jersey, making this state a model for the country. I'd say that puts us firmly on the *right* track.

Donald Sico
Executive Director
New Jersey General Assembly
Majority Office
Trenton, N.J.


MAHONEY Chicago Tribune
HELLO?...IS THIS THE WATER BUFFALO ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE? SOMEONE JUST CALLED ME A COLLEGE STUDENT...
The DAILY CORRECTOR
PENN STUDENT YELLS 'STARTS' FREE SPEECH FIGHT

Liberal Conservatives

I was struck by your use of the neutral term "hardliner" in the cover story about Yeltsin and his opponents ["Yeltsin Rolls the Dice," April 12]. Now that Communism has been unequivocally exposed, leftist journalists, who were long-time admirers of and apologists for Communism, want to give the American public the impression that the "bad guys" (i.e., the Communists) are to be associated with William Buckley and Pat Buchanan (i.e., conservatives) whereas the "good guys" (i.e., the reformers) are to be pawned off as Russia's counterparts to Mario Cuomo and Teddy Kennedy.

While technically it is accurate to use "conservative" for someone who wants to conserve the status quo (i.e., Communism, at least until recently, in Russia), the choice of words by leftist journalists has been motivated by the desire to deceive. In some articles, the term "Communism" is never used in any variation and has been replaced 100 per cent by phrases like "right wing" and "conservative."

I would suggest that you help set the record straight and explicitly call the forces that wish to bring back Communism to Russia "Leftist."

Nick Percival
Ridgefield, Conn.

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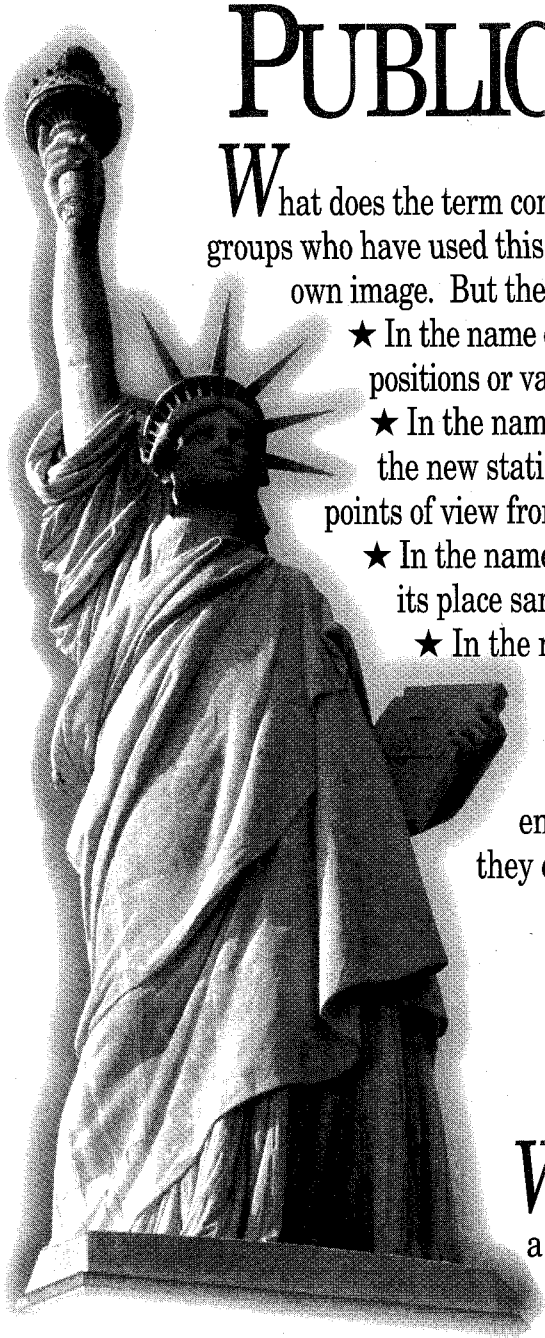
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW



What does the term convey to you? For many it conjures up some "public interest" groups who have used this vehicle for change and social justice to reshape America in their own image. But their image of America is often frightening.

★ In the name of "civil liberties" they seek to censor out of the public square any positions or values informed by faith or which they perceive as "religious."

★ In the name of "free speech" they all too often enforce only the ideology of the new statists and the politically correct police and seek to prevent all other points of view from having access to the marketplace.

★ In the name of "family" they seek to dismantle the family and substitute in its place same sex unions and relationships of convenience.

★ In the name of new found "rights," they endorse, promote and seek to enforce, with our tax dollars, the legalized killing of the unborn up to the day of birth; and the medical extermination of the elderly, the disabled, and the seriously ill. Rather than encourage those who have lost the desire to live to choose life, they encourage them in suicide.

IS THIS ALL REALLY IN THE "PUBLIC INTEREST"?

We don't believe it is and we're convinced you don't either.

We're the AMERICAN CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE, a national public interest law firm and educational organization dedicated to pro-liberty, pro-life and pro-family causes.

★ We believe that the First Amendment protects free speech. That includes religious speech in the public arena and "politically incorrect" speech.

★ We believe that there is an inherent and pre-eminent right to life and that one of the genuine roles of government is to protect, preserve and defend life, not legalize its destruction in the name of new found "rights."

★ We believe that the family is the basic cell of civilization and must be protected and supported if the social order is to remain intact.

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FROM THE EDITOR

No Small Mistakes

■ A reader asks, reasonably enough, how I can endorse Hillary Clinton's "poker-work mottos" (e.g., "people need to think of others, instead of themselves") and yet criticize her search for meaning as superficial.

There is, in fact, no contradiction. We can agree that altruism is superior to selfishness. But as Ovid, the Roman poet, points out: "I see and know what is right, yet I do what is wrong." Given original sin, men and women cannot be trusted to put others first.

Poker-work mottos need the authority of religion, the support of traditional institutions, and the backing of social conventions to sway people.

To judge from Mrs. Clinton's account of Methodism, however, she sees religion almost entirely in terms of social activism; her view of institutions such as the family is the countercultural one that they are oppressive; and if it is not guilt by association to link her to Administration policies, she is disposed to regard social conventions—for instance, those favoring heterosexuality—as outright bigotry.

Mrs. Clinton has spent twenty years liberating people from such constraints. Then, when they are wandering about in a spiritual daze, she recommends they seek "meaning."

Indeed, she proposes for that purpose what was once a Commandment ("Love thy neighbor as thyself") but what is now an abstract platitude because the liberalism of which she is an ornament has undermined all the things that link it to everyday life.

■ John Major's Cabinet re-shuffle confirmed Tony Lejeune's prediction that Chancellor Norman Lamont would be the scapegoat for his government's risible performance—a rare correct use of the metaphor, since a scapegoat is not personally guilty of the sins heaped on him, and Mr. Major was far more responsible than Mr. Lamont for Britain's economic troubles.

But let me declare an interest. Norman Lamont has been a friend for almost thirty years. He is one of the cleverest, funniest, and best-natured people in politics.

Alas, clever people rarely make small mistakes. Norman's error was to stick—with wasted loyalty—to John Major's disastrous policy of taking the British pound into the ERM. But he was known to be a skeptic about fixed exchange rates, and when even 15 per cent interest rates could not keep the pound in the system, he confessed to "singing in his bath."

And since leaving the ERM, the British economy has performed better than almost any other in Europe.

Norman has thus been ousted at the very moment that his policy was succeeding by the man whose own policy had produced something close to a slump. This cannot endear the prime minister to his newest backbencher, and I look forward to Norman's jokes as the Major government staggers into future difficulties, which, on past form, it seems certain to do.

■ The Seamless Garment Network, liberals and radicals (the Berrigans, Sargent Shriver) for "a consistent ethic of life," took a recent page in *The New Republic* to call for the protection of life "threatened . . . by war, abortion, poverty, racism, the arms race, the death penalty and euthanasia."

Well, I am with them on five out of seven; on balance the arms race and the death penalty protect life rather than threaten it. But I would not normally quibble about a generally good cause embraced by people too often found supporting bad ones.

Among the signatures, however, is that of Mitch Snyder, the homeless advocate, who hanged himself. Only God knows the secrets of the human heart; but suicide is surely a greater offense against a consistent life ethic than even war, poverty, or racism. As Chesterton points out, "The man who kills himself kills all men; as far as he is concerned, he wipes out the world."

—JOHN O'SULLIVAN

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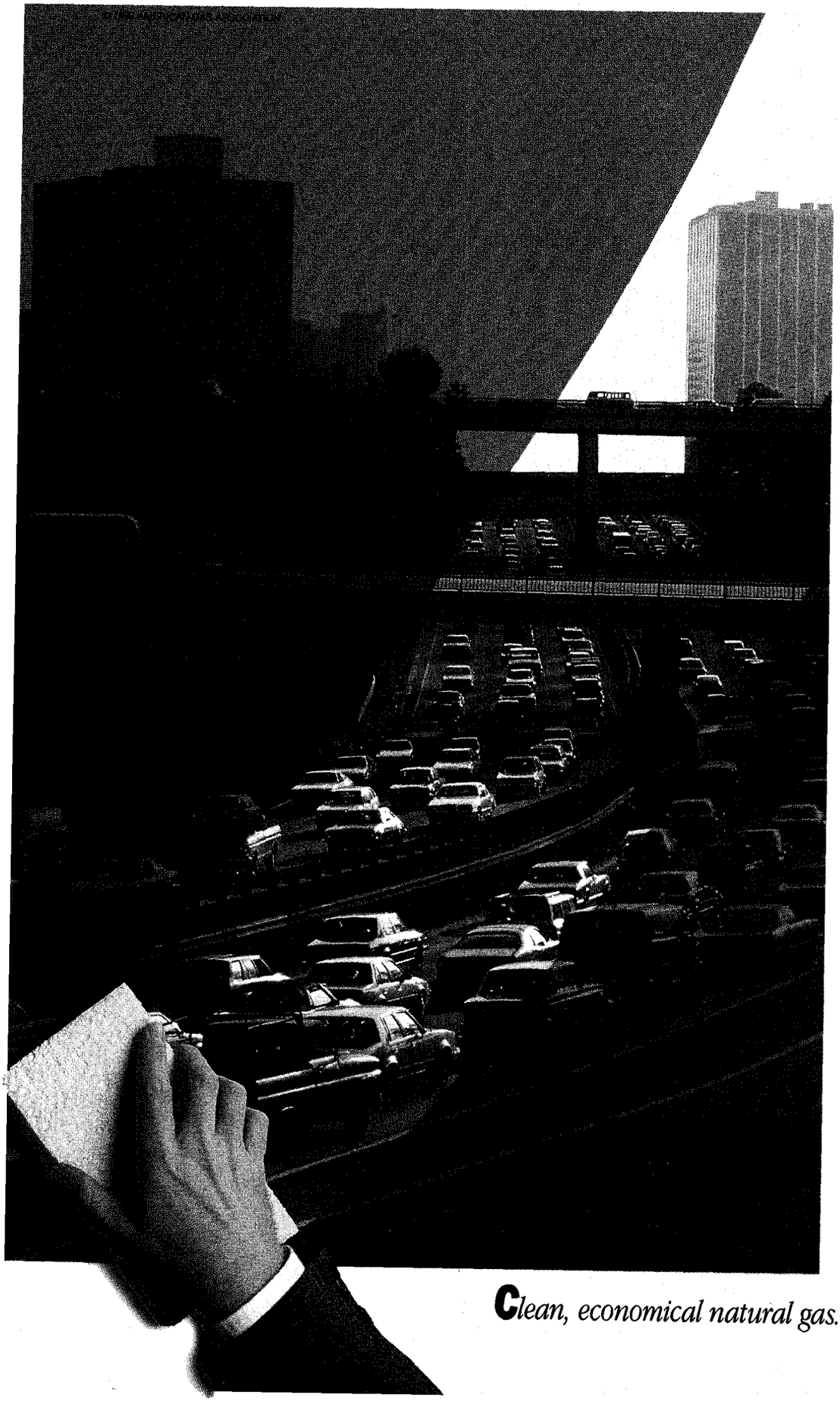
Don't you wish we could just do this to air pollution.



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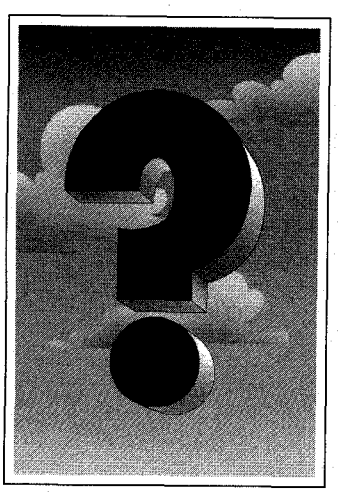

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FOR THE RECORD

■ Selection of **David Gergen** as communications director being called "unifying" and "perplexing." **Pat Shortridge**, press secretary to Rep. **Dick Armey** (R., Tex.), suspects Gergen was brought in to subdue the left wing of the West Wing, though he feels Gergen will be viewed as an "interloper" by **Hillary Clinton**. . . . **Pat Buchanan** working to shoot down view that Gergen was an "architect of the **Reagan** Revolution," as the media like to say. Rather, Buchanan says, he tried to dismantle it. . . . And columnist **Robert Novak** referred to **MacNeil/Lehrer** panelists Gergen (representing conservative view) and **Mark Shields** (representing liberal view) as "the Left" and "the Far Left." . . . Senate Minority Leader **Bob Dole** is mounting campaign for the Senate to look into the firing of the White House travel office and unauthorized release of an FBI statement. . . . Though **Bill Clinton**'s approval rating hovers in the high 30s to low 40s among all Americans, it's at the top of the board among gays, 88 per cent of whom approve of how he's handling things. . . . The Family Research Council's **Gary Bauer** points out that each time a vote in favor of the Clinton tax bill was announced on the floor during the vote last week, Democrats cheered, in sharp contrast to the vote for **George Bush**'s duplicitous tax increase in 1990, when GOP members were sullen. . . . Media bears have become bulls since election of Bill Clinton, reports the Center for Media and Public Affairs. Center found that stories about the economy from October 1990 to November 1992 were 90 per cent negative. However, from November to December 1992, some 62 per cent of the stories were positive, falling back to 41 per cent during first quarter of 1993. . . . **Pauline Gore**, mother of the Vice President and managing partner in **Peabody, Rivlin & Gore**, has been placed on President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

■ Attempt by Republican Senators **Lauch Faircloth** (N.C.), **Hank Brown** (Colo.), **Dan Coats** (Ind.), and **Dirk Kempthorne** (Idaho) to attach a term-limitation amendment to campaign-finance-reform bill was defeated 57 to 39. . . . **U.S. Term Limits**, which has helped put caps on tenure of U.S. congressmen in 15 states, has strong efforts going in Texas, New Hampshire, and New Jersey; growing efforts in many other states. . . . House Speaker **Tom Foley** (D., Wash.) plans this month to contest in court Washington State's term-limit measure, passed by voters last year. . . . Former Gov. **Lamar Alexander** and Watergate counsel **Fred Thompson** are names being tossed around as GOP contenders for either Senate seat in Tennessee in 1994—one being vacated by **Al Gore**'s temporary replacement and that of incumbent **Jim Sasser** (D.). . . . Rep. **Rick Santorum** (R., Pa.; ACU: 83)—a member of the Gang of Seven, young activist conservatives in House—said to be considering GOP nomination to challenge Sen. **Harris Wofford**. Wofford defeated former Attorney General **Dick Thornburgh** for the seat after death of Republican **John Heinz**. . . . In Boston, special election to fill mayor's office, to be vacated by **Ray Flynn** upon Senate confirmation for ambassadorship to Vatican, is planned for November. Standing out in list of Democratic pols is journalist and TV interviewer **Christopher Lydon**. A Lydon campaign proposition is for **Benno Schmidt**, who heads a large-scale private-school venture, to come in and open voucher-supported schools to compete with the dismal public schools, which, Lydon says, are "in the death grip of the teachers' union."

© Baker, *Punch* / Rothco

"With a common monetary system we could be overdrawn in 12 countries simultaneously."

■ Clinton Administration is filling Latin American slots with former aides to **Jimmy Carter**. **Lawrence Pazullo**, player in putting Sandinistas in power, is chief U.S. negotiator trying to get Haiti's generals to install **Jean-Bertrand Aristide** as president. Clinton has appointed **Robert Pastor**, Carter's Latin American advisor, as ambassador to Costa Rica. . . . Faces of Russia: **Boris Fyodorov**, deputy prime minister in charge of the economy, admits that everyone "apart from poor people on the street" is shifting to dollars. He adds: "I would do the same." . . . "It would be very strange if the ruble stabilized," says **Andrei Koshelev**, a dealer on the currency-exchange market, "since credit emission is continung depite all the talk of stabilization." . . . Foreign Minister **Andrei V. Kozyrev**, using the old USSR's UN veto for the first time in 12 years at the Security Council and coming up with a Bosnian initiative, told reporters: "I think that Russia will regain its leadership in world politics. . . . America comes here with its initiatives and then goes away, while Europe remains on the spot." . . . Australian Prime Minister **Paul Keating** wants a group of "eminent persons" to advise him on how to dump **Queen Elizabeth II** as chief of state and appoint a president by 2001, the centennial of the Australian federation. But public-opinion polls favor direct election. . . . **Jacques Attali**, under attack as the lavish spending president of the multinational European bank set up to help the Russians, has new troubles: a charge of plagiarism in his new book, *Verbatim*, which purports to be the inside story of what went on at the Elysée Palace, where his good friend and patron, **François Mitterrand**, resides.

■ **Jay Leno** on possible dismissal of FBI director **William Sessions**: "Apparently another Clinton relative needs a job."

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THE WEEK

■ Maybe we heard him wrong. Maybe he said he was a *nude* Democrat.

■ David Gergen's appointment as "counselor" to President Clinton is a joke so large, imposing, and many-faceted that we cannot decide which aspect to laugh at first. We mean no disrespect to Mr. Gergen, a courteous soul, whose smooth glidings from government to journalism and back remind us yet again of Kitty Muggeridge's description of someone as "having risen without trace." But what explains his latest surge? Mr. Gergen writes a regular column for *U.S. News & World Report*, but his aphorisms are rarely quoted, even in Washington. He appears on PBS, where he is no less famous than Haynes Johnson. The President is fascinated by celebrities, of course, but not of that elevated kind. Mr. Gergen was an aide to President Reagan, and it would be a very funny joke indeed if liberal contempt for Mr. Reagan had deluded Mr. Clinton into thinking he was appointing the architect of the 1984 landslide re-election. For Mr. Gergen left a year before that triumph, and in that year the President's approval rating rose ten points. The funniest joke of all (if a very parochial one) is that in the very week of NATIONAL REVIEW's special issue on bias in the media, the most liberal President for fifty years should appoint the man who was selected by public television as the spokesman for the conservative opinion.

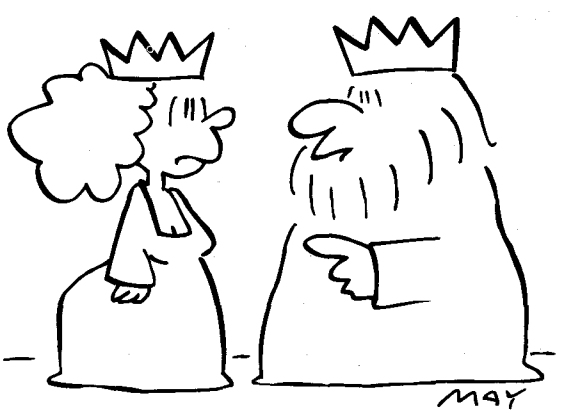
■ Remember four years ago when Senator George Mitchell led a successful filibuster against George Bush's capital-gains tax cut? Mr. Mitchell won that fight by reciting the Left's mantra of "tax cut for the rich." Guess what? New evidence uncovered by Representative Dick Armey shows that the greed-and-envy crowd was dead wrong again. Mr. Mitchell's in-house number-crunchers at the Joint Tax Committee predicted back in 1988 that if tax rates were left alone, capital-gains tax revenues in 1991 would pour in at $285 billion. Instead, the rates were raised, and the tax pulled in only $108 billion. The story gets worse. Because of the decline in capital-gains realizations, over the past two years the Federal Government has collected less revenue from capital-gains taxes at the 28 per cent tax rate than it did in 1985 at the 20 per cent tax rate (after adjusting for inflation). So we will say it one more time: If you really want to tax the rich, cut the capital-gains tax rate.

■ Mr. Gergen says he's neither a Republican nor a conservative. That's what we've been trying to tell him.

■ Wending its way through Congress is the "Cesar Chavez Workplace Fairness Bill," known as the Striker Replacement Bill when President Bush vetoed it last year [see "On the Right," June 7]. The law would prevent employers from hiring permanent replacements for workers striking for higher wages; President Clinton has promised to sign it if it gets to his desk, and he may keep that promise if only for the sake of a new experience. In practice, because training costs are high for so many of today's jobs, companies hire permanent replacements only when union demands become impossible, as in last year's Caterpillar strike, when the raises demanded would have priced the company out of the market. Think of it as the William Clinton Workplace Closure Bill.

■ Meanwhile, Mr. Gore proposes more "businesslike government." Sorry, Mr. Veep, but our oxymoron contest is over.

■ President Clinton's focus on the Supreme Court seems to be rapidly narrowing to a handful of names. By and large, these are not frightening names. United States Circuit Court Judges Jon Newman and Stephen Breyer, for example, are moderate liberals, each with redeeming qualities. Judge Breyer, in particular, despite his association with the Senior Senator from Massachusetts, is respected by Judiciary Republicans Strom Thurmond and Orrin Hatch, and has made a positive public contribution in areas ranging from airline deregulation to criminal-sentencing reform. Nevertheless, these judges would be likely to move the Court in the wrong direction—and they are certain of confirma-



"Me? I thought you *were going to reduce the deficit."*

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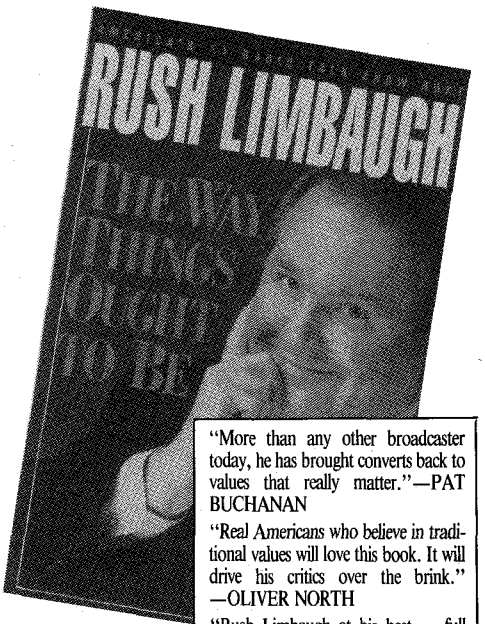

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tion. That does not mean the confirmation process will be a mere formality, however. Judiciary Republicans should use it to inquire intelligently about the nominee's views on a wide range of jurisprudential issues before the courts. If some public education occurs, or even some education of the nominee, then more will have been achieved than by shabby efforts to uncover phony character deficiencies. This advice does not apply—we repeat: *it does not apply*—if the nominee is Laurence Tribe or anyone else whose wedding Hillary Clinton attended.

■ In a series of largely party-line votes, the House Judiciary Committee recently rejected a number of amendments to the Freedom of Choice Act, making it clear that even the mildest restrictions on abortion are anathema to the Democratic Party. Because the amendments failed, FOCA, if passed, would prevent states from requiring minors to get parental (or judicial) consent to an abortion, or requiring doctors to inform a woman fully of the nature and risks of abortion, or even enacting meaningful restrictions on abortions in the last three months of pregnancy—thus going well beyond *Roe* v. *Wade*. Parental consent, informed consent, and late-abortion restrictions all have massive popular support (above 70 per cent), which includes many people who consider themselves pro-choice. Still need convincing? The committee also rejected an amendment offered by Representative Henry Hyde to allow states to require that only licensed physicians perform abortions. If this bill becomes law, your 13-year-old daughter will be able to get a risky late-term abortion from an unlicensed practictioner without your consent—and should you object, Larry Tribe will denounce you as a fanatic.

■ The National Park Service has placed alms boxes at Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were drafted. This is undignified. In our times any government worthy of respect ought to be able to borrow and steal enough so that it doesn't have to beg.

Take Pity

Those Democratic congressmen
  Out on a limb for Bill
Are in free fall as Clinton deals
  With Boren on the Hill,
And when, as Newton codified,
  They hit (ka-BOOM!) the ground,
Constituents will be on hand
  To kick their guts around.

W. H. VON DREELE

■ It seems the price of that famous $200 haircut has been inaccurately reported. At busy Los Angeles International Airport, when the President isn't being coiffed by Cristophe in the middle of a runway, planes take off or land at a rate of 1.3 every minute. Mr. Clinton shut down half the airport for 56 minutes, thereby, it's estimated by Citizens for a Sound Economy, burning up as much as $76,479 in wasted fuel, overtime, and maintenance. Assuming an average man's head contains 150,000 hairs, and that all of Mr. Clinton's head hairs were trimmed or otherwise tended to, that's 51 cents per hair.

■ Most people would be abashed to admit they helped inspire Mrs. Clinton's "politics of meaning" speech. Not so Michael Lerner, the Clintons' pet intellectual. Editor of the liberal Jewish opinion magazine *Tikkun*, he invented that famous phrase, and joyfully reprints a transcript of the speech in his magazine, alongside an article by himself about how "meaning" and "spirituality" can be restored to the lives of Americans. Americans are "hungering for more meaning," he writes, and their hunger will only be "temporarily satisfied by the sense of community engendered by sharing the burden of increased taxes." That's disappointing. What can we do? What's really needed are: federally mandated "Occupational Stress Groups" in the workplace, a national "Occupational Stress Day," government-led "Honor Labor" campaigns, worker committees on "Occupational Safety and Health" with power to overrule private employers, and a government-organized army of "union personnel, worker representatives, and psychotherapists" empowered to create "a new spirit of cooperation, mutual caring, and dedication to work." This all may sound somehow familiar to former inmates of Eastern Europe. But, you see, the problem with Communism is that it failed "to institute [a] sense of 'being in it together.'" Ah, so that was it. Please, don't anybody introduce Mrs. Clinton to the Maharishi.

■ The American Automobile Association offers a booklet providing "tips for environmentally responsible travelers." We recommend walking tours of the Vice President's office.

■ President Clinton has extended diplomatic recognition to the Marxist MPLA regime in Angola in the name both of democracy (since the MPLA leader won a plurality in last fall's presidential election) and of political strategy (inducing Jonas Savimbi of the pro-Western UNITA to come to terms). We hold no brief for Savimbi, whom we have criticized in the past; but the Administration's arguments don't hold water. The elections were badly flawed, with UN observers candidly admitting in an October 16 report that there were "irregularities . . . in the electoral

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process, which could have affected the overall outcome of the voting." It is this electoral distortion that prompted UNITA's recourse to military action. UNITA is now in control of three-quarters of Angola, but the MPLA also has a secure tribal base and neither side can defeat the other. So recognition of the Marxist MPLA will change nothing on the ground—it is a bow to the ideological preferences of the Congressional Black Caucus—unless the Administration does something more rash, like sending arms to the regime to battle Savimbi. Conservatives in the Congress need to be alert to nip any such mischief in the bud.

■ The commissioners of Dade County, Florida, responding to Hispanic and Haitian pressures, repealed a 13-year-old law mandating that county business be conducted in English. Language has been an unsettled issue in Dade County, where Miami is located, for some time: the English-only law itself replaced a 1976 law declaring the county bilingual. It will continue to be an unsettled issue, since the Florida state constitution has decreed since 1988 that English is the official state language, and a court challenge to the county law is inevitable. There have been Americans speaking languages other than English since before there was an America; German has been used in Pennsylvania since the seventeenth century. But language helps to define a nation—and to integrate minorities and immigrants into economic and political life. Especially in a country as diverse as the United States (or a city as diverse as Miami) the centrality of English should be asserted and maintained at the level of government. Miamians can *hablar español* and *pale kreyol* in their homes and businesses. But so long as they live under the laws of Dade County, rather than those of Havana or Port-au-Prince, those laws should be expressed and upheld in English.

■ Carol Browner, head of the EPA, said in a recent speech that she was appointing a "Task Force to develop cross-program industry clusters" as part of a new policy of "multi-media prevention" within "the Source Reduction Review Project." She also said she plans to "initiate a broad-based culture change throughout the agency." If that includes the adoption of English as the medium of communications at EPA, perhaps Miss Browner could attend classes along with the rest?

■ Oliver Stone's TV debut, the six-hour mini-series *Wild Palms*, while heavily pondered over by journalist-intellectuals, failed to seize the country's attention the way David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* did, which is what Mr. Stone and ABC were plainly hoping for. They should have known to cool their expectations. No one had ever seen anything like *Twin Peaks*, on TV or anywhere else. It gave a welcome caffeine jolt to a sleepy medium. Whereas the motifs of *Wild Palms*—technology run amock, a sinister preacher–*cum*–politician, suburban Angst, Los Angeles as the nation's capital for weirdness—are all painful media clichés. The storyline, though, is puzzling: Evil right-wing conspiracy threatens to take over America. What's going on here? According to the rest of Mr. Stone's works, *another* evil right-wing conspiracy has been running America since 1963. How did it lose out to these new guys? Or is that what they mean by the conservative crack-up?

■ In Green Lane, Pennsylvania, pop. 442, both parties forgot to nominate anyone for mayor, town council, or tax collector. Nobody is running for anything. Look for an economic miracle in Green Lane, Pennsylvania.

■ In Capital Hill softball, it was Heritage Foundation 20, Brookings Institution 19, in extra innings. We like a win as much as anyone, but c'mon, Ed, you should be able to take out a bunch of liberals a lot more easily than that.

Stone Boats

FIRST CAME President Clinton's heavy-handed attempt to purge the White House travel staff—a story that should have shriveled overnight but that stayed on the front pages for a week, as it sent out shoots and runners of cronyism. Then came the scandal of the First Couple's barber, whose haircuts cost the per-capita income of Somalia, not counting travel expenses. Then Mrs. Clinton, promoting her health-care plan, delivered an assault on the medical profession that made even the *New York Times* blanch. Finally, in a victory so slim it might as well have been a defeat, President Clinton got his economic package through the House—where the Democrats outnumber the Republicans 255 to 176—by only six votes. Like many an unpopular politician before him, Mr. Clinton concluded that the source of his problems was a failure to communicate—and so he capped the fortnight's follies by appointing David Gergen as "counselor."

Bill Clinton ran and won as a "New Democrat," who promised to cut the deficit while relieving the tax burdens of the middle class. Since his inauguration, he has proposed trifling and spurious budget cuts in return for higher taxes—not counting the taxes that will have to be raised to pay for his health-care reform. This is the source of public doubt about him, and the main reason that such trivia as the travel bureau and the haircuts resonate. President Clinton does not have a communications prob-

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lem. He is communicating his program all too well. The voters don't like it, which is why they are coming to dislike him.

Senate Republicans, like their colleagues in the House, should do everything they can to block and oppose the President's package. But let them avoid joining round-heeled Democratic moderates (we almost said: Democratic Gergens) like Senators Boren, Moynihan, and Nunn in their attempts to trim the package or to improve it. Another thing Bill Clinton campaigned on, besides tax relief, was an end to gridlock, and that he has indeed achieved. When the voters come to repent of their folly, their anger should be directed not against amorphous and ideological neutral "incumbents," but against the Democratic Party as solely responsible for the mess.

It is good to see so many unsatisfactory people—the Clintons; the congressional establishment; Gergen—in the same boat, and even better to know that the boat is made of stone.

Stenholm Unmasked

CONGRESSMAN Charles Stenholm of Texas is a heroic figure to many, a conservative Democrat who joins with Republicans to fight the liberal leadership in Congress.

If that reputation was deserved ten years ago, it does not describe Mr. Stenholm today. More often than not, he now acts as either a tool or a dupe of the House leadership, lending his support to liberal legislation in exchange for cosmetic changes that allow him to continue posing as a conservative to constituents. Most recently, he threw his support behind Mr. Clinton's record tax increase after the leadership agreed to include a provision that allegedly caps entitlement spending and prevents Congress from reneging on the spending cuts in the just-passed House Reconciliation bill.

The entitlement cap is a charade. More important, there are almost no spending cuts to enforce. Domestic spending under President Clinton's budget will actually increase more than twice as fast as inflation. Even more disturbing, the Stenholm "cap" will do nothing to prevent Congress from reversing the tiny amount of Washington-defined spending cuts in the budget. It merely requires that the President *notify* Congress once entitlement spending exceeds the levels included in the House Reconciliation bill. Congress supposedly must then vote on whether to fund this new spending with higher taxes, offset the new spending with spending "cuts," or simply let the deficit increase. In reality, the House Rules Committee will be able to waive even this requirement, and the deficit will continue its upward climb.

Mr. Stenholm's behavior is especially troubling because of his leadership of a group calling itself the Conservative Democratic Forum (CDF), composed of fifty-odd Southern and marginal-seat Democratic congressmen. When Mr. Stenholm sells out, he often takes the CDF with him. Indeed, that is exactly what happened with the budget. By providing an excuse for wavering Democrats to vote for the bill, his phony cap gave the margin of victory to the largest tax increase in history.

On vote after vote, on issue after issue, Charlie Stenholm has become a tool of the House leadership. Rather than being viewed as a conservative hero, he should be seen for what he is: a walking advertisement for term limits.

Examining Miss Guinier

IF RUMOR IS CORRECT, Lani Guinier may have withdrawn as President Clinton's nominee to head up the civil-rights division of the Justice Department by the time this NATIONAL REVIEW is in the hands of its readers. But that withdrawal will prove no more than a local victory in a lost war if Miss Guinier is thought to have been defeated because she was "out of the mainstrean."

While Miss Guinier may be radical from the point of view of the average American who equates civil rights with fair play, she is an orthodox contemporary civil-rights lawyer. At most, Lani Guinier is simply more candid about her ideas than others.

Consider the transformation of the Voting Rights Act. Originally enacted in 1965 to eliminate state electoral devices that unfairly stood in the way of black registration and voting—e.g., polling places only in white neighborhoods—the Act was radically amended in 1982 (with Miss Guinier's support) to establish a "proportional representation of minorities" standard by which all electoral laws were to be evaluated. As a result, for over a decade (with the connivance of the Republican National Committee,

Not at the Astor

He had to go and lose it at the White House;
It nearly killed his mother down in Hope.
A porter said he had it when he entered,
And Dee Dee thinks she saw it with the soap.
The Mrs. can't believe it's turned up missing;
A parlormaid denied it's in her blouse.
When the phone goes ting-a-ling,
He yells, "Where's that vision thing?"
But he had to go and lose it at the White House.

W. H. VON DREELE

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which mistakenly calculated short-term political advantage in doing so), the Act has been employed to create electoral bantustans throughout the country. More recently, the standard has "evolved" further: What electoral arrangements will assure the maximum possible number of minority representatives?

In the process, incidental constitutional safeguards, including federalism, equal protection of the laws, and discrimination defined in terms of process rather than outcome, have been subordinated. Under this Voting Rights Act, civil-rights advocates could argue consistently, as they did last month, that a federal law requiring states to register voters at driver's licensing offices but not at welfare offices was "discriminatory on its face."

Lani Guinier is the embodiment of this revolution in voting-rights law. Her writings are replete with euphemisms for quotas: "the Senate Judiciary Committee should begin evaluating federal judicial nominations with reference to specific goals for increasing non-white nominees"—for example, they should consider nominations twenty to thirty at a time rather

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Coming Cuban Collapse

THE CATASTROPHIC decline of Castro's Cuba may come as a shock to many Americans, who as recently as last year were assured by the *Washington Post* that Cubans are spared "the worst ills of U.S.-style capitalism: hunger, homelessness, and soaring medical costs." But with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba's problems can no longer be disguised.

Castro responded to the disappearance of the subsidy that propped up his economy by insisting on "Socialism or death." In 1992 he initiated a survival plan, known as the "Zero Option," by which Cuba could revert to a pre-industrial economy. Apparently, it succeeded. In 1993, oxen have replaced tractors, bicycles have replaced automobiles, and, as a last-ditch attempt to save the regime, the government is talking about evicting city populations to undertake subsistence agriculture.

A confidential November 1992 Cuban government report, leaked to the Cuban American National Foundation (an exile group), predicted utter collapse of the Cuban economy by July 1993. The report asserted that as of September 1992, 226 out of 415 basic products could neither be imported nor produced there. Of the remaining 189, inventories were at between 5 and 26 per cent of historical levels.

Recent reports of Cuban conditions are dire. For 1993, the government says it can count on obtaining only 6 million tons of oil; Cuba needs 13 million tons to function at historical levels. Official sources report that the sugar industry is operating at less than 30 per cent of capacity. Power outages in Havana and Santiago de Cuba increased in March to ten hours per day from about eight hours weekly. Interruptions are blamed on lack of fuel and breakdowns at thermoelectric plants.

Public transportation, already so scarce that riders overflow vehicles, has been cut by two-thirds in Havana. Production is slowing to a trickle, since people unable to commute to work by bicycle are being laid off or "reassigned" to non-existent jobs close to their homes. People are being forced out of homes in Havana to accommodate officials with more clout.

Food is "a national-security problem," according to an official at the Center for Studies of the Cuban Economy at the University of Havana—so scarce that government officials have advised the population that ground eggshells are a good source of calcium. Government agencies are also advertising the nutritional value of several wild plants. Basic foodstuffs such as milk, eggs, sugar, meat, rice, and beans are rationed, but only rice and sugar are readily available. Recent refugees to the United States say people eat pigeons and cats.

Living conditions for most are already at the bare minimum required for survival, and the government has announced that the situation will worsen. The country's vaunted health-care and education systems are in a shambles. An outbreak of a strange disease, termed "optic neuritis" by the authorities, has become a full-fledged epidemic. The victim's entire neurological system is impaired and a frequently irreversible blindness sets in. Castro claims that the U.S. has loosed a virus on Cuba, but most Cuban and U.S. experts agree the cause is a vitamin-B deficiency.

Castro still refuses to call off his socialist war against the market, but it seems that his regime's last days should be counted in months, not years.

At a forthcoming meeting of the Politburo in July, Castro may be held accountable for his pledge of "Socialism or death." Some analysts believe Fidel could be placed under house arrest and a new government formed. Others even believe he could be assassinated.

Perhaps the best solution would be a professorship for Castro at Harvard, where he could berate the affluent society, or a post as Mrs. Clinton's national health advisor. —PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

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Can An Intelligent Person Be Religious?

Among the well-educated the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted, unlettered, and irrational, that the price of salvation is checking your mind at the Pearly Gates. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, rationalism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, Freudianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

Contrary to stereotypes, this religious renaissance does not imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, and human dignity; nor does it signify a hostility to science, only an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual engagement with the sacred. Among other things, we scrutinize the religious dimensions of the great events and issues of the past and present, and probe the wisdom offered not only by the Bible and Church fathers, but also by such giants as St. Francis, Aquinas, Dante, Kierkegaard, Newman, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Niebuhr, Gandhi, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Merton, Schumacher, Thomas More, Dorothy Day, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther King, Flannery O'Connor, Mother Teresa, and Archbishops Romero and Tutu.

An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by George Will as "splendid," by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively," by the *Los Angeles Times* as "influential," by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky," by *Utne Reader* as "surprisingly original," by *Library Journal* as "brilliant," and by Christopher Derrick, England's foremost Catholic apologist, as "by far the best Catholic magazine in the English-speaking world."

We publish Protestants, Catholics, Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, Jews, and an occasional nonbeliever. Writers who've appeared in our pages include such diversely penetrating intellects as Robert Bellah, Christopher Lasch, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Daniel Bell, Robert Coles, Irving Howe, Walker Percy, Norman Lear, John Lukacs, J.M. Cameron, Henri Nouwen, Avery Dulles, Gordon Zahn, Will Campbell, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Mouw, and Sheldon Vanauken. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy ideological pigeonholing. We'll keep you on your toes!

Whether or not you're Catholic, if you yearn for a sane, intelligent, and nonglitzy exploration of the religious dimensions of our lives and our world, we invite you to get to know us.

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than individually so that they can evaluate "the impact of these nominations as a totality on the composition of the federal bench." She mocks "equality of access" and views "equal outcomes" as a yardstick of anti-discrimination law. She is contemptuous of "conciliation and compromise" as an alternative enforcement tool to litigation. And she questions even "majority rule" in our electoral system when insufficient numbers of representatives with the proper pigmentation are elected to office.

Nominee or not, Miss Guinier can argue—not unconvincingly—that these views are not seriously at odds with current legal trends in the land. If so, should we not question these trends rather then merely the qualifications of Lani Guinier?

The Clinton Doctrine

AFTER WEEKS of fits and starts, the Western powers and Russia settled on a lowest-common-denominator policy in Bosnia that represents, in essence, a collapse. On May 22 the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Spain, Russia, and the U.S., meeting in Washington, announced what they called a "joint action program." Its main thrust was to call for creation of "safe havens" for Muslim civilians, to be protected by international forces. In other words, no further efforts will be made to roll back Serb military gains, but refugees will be shielded in ghettos which will soon enough come to resemble Palestinian refugee camps (i.e., breeding grounds for international terrorism). Other steps included a step-up of humanitarian relief supplies, the sending of monitors to Kosovo and Macedonia to prevent the spread of the conflict, warnings to Bosnian Croats to stop mistreating Muslims, and maintenance of the (ineffective) economic sanctions on Serbia.

The new policy is not really "joint," since the U.S. refuses, rightly, to send ground troops for any of these functions and promises only logistical support. It involves no particular "action" of any significance, certainly not the air strikes or arming of the Bosnians that Bill Clinton promised in his campaign. And the result of the new policy has been to embolden Serbia, which, seeing no obstacle to its victory, has now refused to permit international observers to monitor whether it is arming Serbs in Bosnia. This in turn has elicited a wave of indignation from Islamic countries at the West's sellout of the Bosnian Muslims.

For the Clinton Administration, the humiliating climbdown in Bosnia fits comfortably with a major pronouncement on foreign policy by a senior State Department official to a Washington luncheon on May 25. (The official spoke on condition of anonymity, but was later unmasked as the Number 3 man, Peter Tarnoff.) He declared that the United States would henceforth concentrate on its domestic economic problems and withdraw from many foreign-policy leadership roles that it had customarily assumed. He said the U.S. would defer more to the UN and to our allies (as in Bosnia), and take a pass on dealing forcefully with the various "middleweight powers" that threaten us in the post–Cold War era. He praised Warren Christopher's trip to Europe in early May in which the Secretary of State lamely suggested, but did not press, the President's ideas for stronger action against the Serbs. "People were genuinely disarmed by the fact that he was there to consult," Mr. Tarnoff said approvingly.

The only people disarmed were the Bosnian victims of Serb aggression—and, in a deeper sense, all those in the world who look to the U.S. for protection. There *is* no substitute for vigorous American leadership if the world is to offer any semblance of hope for security and decency. This scandalous Clinton Doctrine was quickly repudiated by the White House, but the disclaimer rang false. This Administration's foreign policy, in fact, is in the grip of the defeatism and passivity that Tarnoff expressed. That invites not only ridicule and contempt but also an increasing probability of future fiascos. Foreign policy and national security give all the signs of being a significant political issue in 1996. We can only pray that too many irretrievable disasters do not befall the Free World in the interim.

Rotten in Denmark

DENMARK's voters ratified the Maastricht Treaty in a May 18 referendum by about 57 to 43 per cent. John Major now hopes to secure quick ratification from the British Parliament. And the ambitious plans for European economic and political union thus seem to have a new lease on life.

But rumors of Maastricht's survival are greatly exaggerated. The turnaround in Denmark since the Danish public's initial rejection of the Treaty a year ago came about because of two factors: a drumbeat of propaganda from Europe's entire political establishment that a second Danish rejection would bring the end of all human life on the planet, and a series of significant concessions by the European Community to limit Denmark's surrender of sovereignty. Denmark will not be required to join a unified currency, a joint defense policy, a common immigration policy, a common legal system, or a system of common citizenship. Any more such "successes" for Maastricht—and other countries will seek to build a "Europe à la carte" on these precedents—will leave little left of it.

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And a good thing too. There is something inordinately distasteful about political elites destroying the self-confidence of peoples in order to make them accept major changes that they don't want. National sovereignty in democratic Western Europe is a healthy expression of national identity and, what is more, of democratic political accountability. The grand reconciliation among peoples in Western Europe after World War II, and the degree of cooperation they have achieved in economic and political matters since, are positive phenomena, but they are the achievements of the modern "Europe of states"—the realistic vision of, e.g., Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher, which built on the nation-state instead of attempting to stamp it out.

It is on this basis that Europe's future progress will be achieved, including its reaching out to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. This prospect bears no resemblance to the political elite's dream of a monstrous statist bureaucracy in Brussels regulating away national differences, national autonomy, and the economic and ultimately political freedom of Europeans.

The West's strategic imperative at this moment in history, in any case, is to broaden the Community to embrace and bolster the new democracies of the East. All the pledges of aid to Central and Eastern Europe, and all the self-congratulation about Western European unity, are mocked by the EC's cynical restrictive trade policies that have blocked the desperate new democracies' access to its market. The second strategic priority must be to firm up the crucial transatlantic link, which is weakening because of irresponsible trade policies on both sides of the Atlantic and because of the mediocre quality of the current political leadership in all major Western countries. Maastricht is a damaging distraction from both enterprises.

Mainstream Democrat

IF Roberta Achtenberg, newly confirmed as assistant secretary for HUD, were a public official in public and a lesbian in private, we would consider the latter point none of our business. But she lives out her private life in public, and as an elected official she has taken lesbian militancy about as far as it can go.

"In her public life," insists California Senator Barbara Boxer, "she's mainstream." Well, during her career in San Francisco Miss Achtenberg founded the National Center for Lesbian Rights; urged that

RIGHT DATA

The Static Model Lives

ONE OF the most important promises President Clinton made in his State of the Union address was to increase the accuracy of federal revenue estimates. The current budget bill, however, represents a big step backward.

We are told, for example, that higher tax rates on income, payrolls, and corporate profits, along with an entirely new tax on the BTU-generating capacity of different fuels, will raise an additional $250 billion over the next five years. While Mr. Clinton's tax package has been hotly debated, the revenue estimates are rarely questioned.

In fact, the higher tax rates may not produce a cent of new revenue. The Administration's revenue estimates are based on the CBO's static model of the economy, in which an *X* per cent rise in tax rates invariably produces an *X* per cent rise in revenues. This mindset enables the CBO to blithely assume that the proposed increase in the top personal-income-tax rate from 31 per cent to 39.6 per cent will bring in an additional $115 billion from affluent Americans over the next five years.

History shows that wealthy taxpayers will either shift to tax-exempt forms of income, increase their use of existing tax deductions, or—worst of all—cut back on their work and investment effort to avoid paying taxes at higher rates. Even a small change in taxpayer behavior can send revenues south in a hurry. Martin Feldstein points out that if a couple with $180,000 of taxable income were to reduce their income by just 10 per cent, they would pay $3,700 less in tax under Mr. Clinton's tax rates than they do under current rates.

Similarly, luxury taxes imposed in 1990 ended up costing the government money when thousands of middle-class workers in the yacht and aircraft industries were thrown out of work. The sharp drop in asset sales after capital-gains taxes were raised in 1987 resulted in an equally sharp drop in federal capital-gains revenues. The elimination of passive-loss deductions in 1987, touted as a big revenue raiser, contributed to the collapse of the commercial-real-estate market.

Anyone seriously interested in cutting the deficit should propose: No new taxes. In the absence of new taxes, revenues will be $305 billion higher in 1998 than in 1993. Cap spending, and the deficit battle is won.

—Ed Rubenstein

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$500,000 in public money be given to a homosexual center for teenagers; opposed the closing of gay bathhouses; and led a campaign against the Boy Scouts for refusing to accept homosexual scoutmasters. Far from upholding the right of privacy (the nominal goal of the gay-rights movement), she has held that private organizations have no right of privacy against gay claims.

Last year she rode in the Gay Pride Parade with her lover, Mary Morgan, and the seven-year-old boy they jointly bring up (*Judge* Morgan—remember, we're talking San Francisco—having conceived the poor child by artificial insemination), smooching in a convertible bearing the legend "celebrating family values." Tolerance is one thing. This is something else entirely. Perversion is no excuse for vulgarity.

In short Miss Achtenberg presented a target only Republicans could have missed. Her defeat would have needed a mere nudge—a salty Dole wisecrack would have made headlines, reignited Bill Clinton's gay problem with a vengeance, and scared the Senate into voting down the nomination. But it was left to Jesse Helms to lead the opposition; Miss Achtenberg duly accused him of anti-Semitism.

Is Miss Achtenberg in the mainstream? We don't think so. And even though the Republicans may not like it, they will just have to get used to being on the popular side of cultural and moral issues.

Winston Burdett, R I P

ONE DAY IN the early Fifties, I got a call from Winston Burdett, who was then an assistant to Edward R. Murrow at CBS. He told me that a few years earlier, when he was a reporter on the old *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, he had been a member of the Communist Party, which controlled the Newspaper Guild. One day the local Communist whip called him in and said that he had had orders from Moscow to recruit a member to cover the Soviet–Finnish War from the Western side. He gave Winston half a matchbox and told him to go to a Stockholm hotel and wait for an agent to appear with the other half.

Winston called himself an ideological Communist. So he was very disillusioned when the other agent proved to be a tough KGB man—crude, churlish, and offensive. Winston's disillusionment had begun—and he incautiously let it be known.

At that time, South Persia was occupied by the British and North Persia by the Soviets (the two now make up Iran). Winston's wife was a reporter in South Persia. One day her car was stopped along the North Persian border by a truck full of Russian soldiers who inquired whether Mrs. Burdett was inside. She was killed instantly. Soon thereafter, I got him to agree to tell the story to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, where I had been counsel just a few years before.

After his testimony before the committee he was sent by CBS to Rome, where he became a specialist in Vatican affairs; even after his retirement he was activated to cover the elevation of Pope John Paul II. Winston would lecture visiting American students on world events from the roof of the CBS building there. His talks were brilliant and penetrating. His charm and affability left a lasting impression.

Winston died last week in Rome. He will be missed as a professional journalist and as a witness to his past. —ROBERT MORRIS

Who Will Free the Sword?

As Ross Perot goes drip, drip, drip
And Mr. Clinton's ratings slip,
One would have thought the GOP
Would have unsheathed its snickersnee,
But that old thing's still stuck in stone
And Dole can't pull it out alone;
So all they give is lots of lip
As Ross Perot goes drip, drip, drip.

W. H. VON DREELE

NOTES & ASIDES

■ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn will lecture in the United States once again this year, from September 15 until December 1. Mr. Leddihn is the most learned and versatile scholar since Erasmus. His view of things is entertaining, provocative, and profound. He will lecture on any subject from aardvark to zyzzogeton, in any language, though he is most comfortable in English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese, and Russian. He has written for NATIONAL REVIEW since our founding, and has delighted audiences in every state of the Union. Contact: Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, A-6072, Lans, Tyrol, Austria. —WFB

■ Dear WFB:

There is an interesting writer who merits the attention of conservatives such as yourself. Charles Taylor is Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at McGill. He is author of *The Ethics of Authenticity* and *Sources of the Self*, both published by Harvard. He has much to say that I think is useful to reconstructing the discourse of the Republican Party for these times. His thesis in brief is that one can indeed reason about the necessity of value judgments within the context of the demand for multicultural

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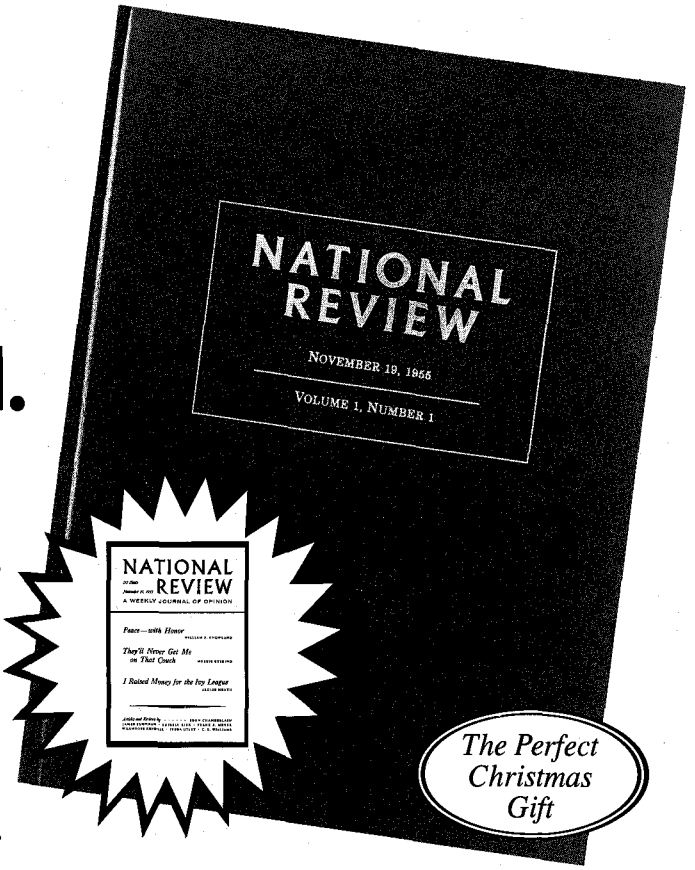
And Bill Buckley Said "Let There Be Right." And There Was Right. And The Right Was Good.



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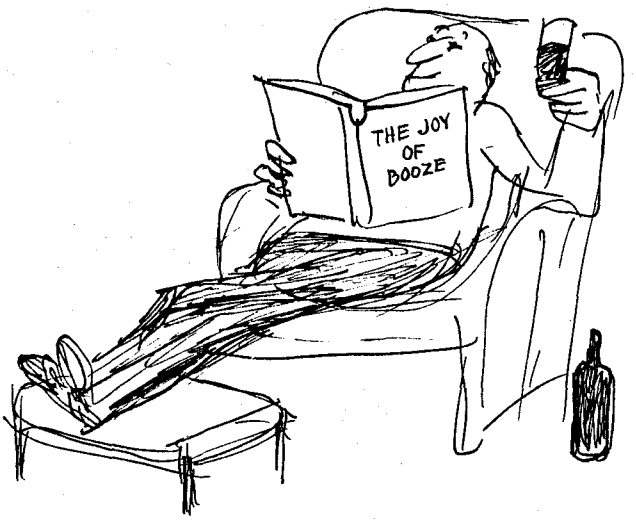

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recognition; he argues that the ethic of recognizing differences without discriminating standards is a debauchery of authenticity. As an instance, he notes that the value of authentic connection between men and women resides precisely in the complementarity of the sexes and not in their sameness. By his reasoning, the legitimation of homosexuality "self-destructs" the very power of legitimation because it is made the same as heterosexuality, which it decidedly is not when viewed against the "inescapable horizon" of sexual complementarity. He details other "inescapable horizons" which give authenticity its teeth. He remains a philosopher rather than partisan; his thesis is offered as a demonstration that one can (and must) learn to reason about the need for recognition of the "oppressed" and not just "feel" about it (one way or another). His is a real advance in detailing the parameters of that reason. This is the theme of his *Ethics*.

Sources traces the development of the idea of self-knowledge as a social good from antiquity into its present puerile forms of multiculturalism and a right "to do one's own thing." I have a very strong hunch that you and others will find a way to make a compelling argument for conservative agendas by voicing for liberals where they themselves are stuck personally. In other words, you will find a language in Taylor for helping liberals see that they are stuck precisely because of their rejection of the "inescapable horizons" that conservatism has never lost touch with. Taylor makes a reasoned argument without falling into the reactionary and censorious tarpit some conservatives are prone to get caught in. Pat Buchanan is right to say this is cultural warfare. But Taylor (mostly in his *Sources*) shows how Buchanan's type of departure point can never engage liberals in the needed dialogue. I'm sure you will find Taylor's work immensely practical.

Sadly, I write to you anonymously. I am in a profession dominated by the politically correct and it would be suicide for me to become known as one who is increasingly sympathetic to political conservatism. In this regard, Taylor is one sure route to ridding American universities of the horrific repression of political correctness.

Good luck.

Dear Anon.: Many thanks. Will have a look. Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley:

"Meredith is a prose Browning—and so is Browning." Well over four years ago Wilde's *mot* led me, by a circuitous route, to the correct solution of the formidable Bentsen–Quayle Problem ["Notes & Asides," April 12], which solution I now reveal for your delectation:

BENTSEN; Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine, and you, sir, are no Jack Kennedy.

QUAYLE: And neither was Jack Kennedy.

Yours very truly,
Walter Bass
Hopkinsville, Ky.

Dear Mr. Bass: Ah, I don't think so. Quayle would have had to preface it with the wisecrack by Wilde. And also give out those crazy reasons for thinking Browning less than the poetic genius he was. No, sorry. Reject. Cordially, WFB

Dear Mr. Buckley:

You and Philip Shambaugh are such gentlemanly pussycats. There is no touché in the ripostes you conjecture for Senator (then) Quayle *vs.* Senator (then) Bentsen—no go for the kill.

That night I strained my telepathic powers to no avail. When the roistering subsided from Senator Bentsen's claque, I wanted Dan to say, "But neither is Mike Dukakis." And when the house again settled, "And you are certainly no Lyndon Johnson."

Sincerely,
Guy Walker
Indianapolis, Ind.

Dear Mr. Walker: Nope. The asymmetry kills it. Sorry. WFB

Dear Bill:

In regard to the Bentsen–Quayle debate, the reply Quayle should have given to the "You are no Jack Kennedy" line is, "I don't have to be a Jack Kennedy. My competition isn't as tough as his."

Sincerely,
Gary R. Anderson
Galesburg, Ill.

Dear Mr. Anderson: I think you get a pass on that one. Congratulations. **—WFB**

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The DECLINE OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM

One Size Fits None

JAMES W. MICHAELS

OVER a casual drink, a junior editor at one of our prestigious dailies assumed a lofty tone when my wife characterized his newspaper as liberal. "I would prefer to say," he sniffed, "that we comform to community standards."

What standards? Which community? His community and that of many of today's newspeople is the one Joseph Schumpeter called the New Class—people who owe their jobs to the economic surpluses produced by capitalism but who were taught in schools to dislike and distrust the market. The old hard-drinking *Front Page* types are history, replaced by people with a tendency to think of themselves as a priestly class, elected by no one but believing themselves to be of the elect, and dedicated to helping make the U.S. more egalitarian, more multicultural. Despite some superficial gestures toward balance, politically correct thinking permeates the news and cultural coverage in most of our daily newspapers.

But is politically correct news good business? Apparently not. The daily newspaper industry is in shock, unable to attract young readers and suffering the probably permanent loss of many traditional advertisers.

The easy explanation for the decline of the dailies is TV. Television news is undemanding, has gorgeous newsreaders, and doesn't clog the garbage. But TV and a mentally lazy public aren't the only things turning people off newspapers.

Though saturated with TV, Americans have not stopped reading. During the years when newspaper circulation has been flat, magazine sales have increased by half and are heavy among younger people. For newspapers the real problem is not a non-reading public but their own failure to attract new customers to replace those who die or move away. The half of the American people who still read newspapers are the greying half.

At least part of the blame for the growing irrelevance of newspapers rests on those liberal enforcers of "community standards." They have made the American newspaper a mirror for their own beliefs, prejudices, and aspirations rather than those of potential readers. They fill the papers with articles about racism, sexism, homophobia, and the plight of the poor and the homeless. Fair enough. But how often do they delve into those things that really touch the lives of the great middle class that is their audience? Not much. I could fill this issue of *NR* with accounts of good stories passed up by newspaper editors who could only see through politically correct spectacles.

So you don't read many newspaper articles about small business people coping desperately with the proliferating apparatus of the state. About how racial quotas hurt young white males and create racial tensions. About how senseless environmental restrictions drive industry out of your community. About teachers' unions driving up the cost of schools and driving down the quality.

MY THESIS is this: If newspapers hope to survive they would do well to be less concerned with a liberal social agenda and more with the lives, hopes, and fears of their potential readers.

A significant exception tests my rule that newspapers are out of touch with their readers. The *Washington Post* is the most profitable paper in the

Mr. Michaels is editor of Forbes.

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NAME OF GAL IN KENNEDY RAPE CASE REVEALED!
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EXCLUSIVE
NANCY BY KITTY
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KELLEY TELLS ALL!
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United States. For good reason. Its political correctness and enthusiasm for big government are in tune with affluent people in that one-industry town of pols, bureaucrats, and lobbyists. Its interests—in both senses of the word—are their interests.

The *Washington Post* is often a role model for newspapers elsewhere but in the wrong way. What editors should learn from the *Post* is how to cater to their readers. What is good and palatable for Federal Government workers isn't necessarily good for private citizens in Cleveland or Chicago, New Orleans, Seattle, or Denver.

In a strange twist of history, it was TV that created the politically correct, monopoly daily newspaper. American newspapers once displayed—as British newspapers still do—a wide diversity of opinion, ranging from *The Daily Worker* to Colonel Bertie McCormick's FDR-hating *Chicago Tribune*.

Newspapering was a profitable and fun business but it wasn't Wall Street scale. What changed things was the newspaper industry's response to the spread of TV.

With the loss of advertisers to TV, publishers solved the problem of remaining profitable in a shrinking market by consolidating. With fewer overall advertising dollars around, some weaker newspapers failed. Others merged with stronger newspapers—this with the full cooperation of Congress, which, ever responsive to dispensers of publicity, permitted mergers of competing newspapers so long as they could show that one of the papers might otherwise fail. Today there are few two-daily cities left. This winter three more became one-paper towns: San Diego, San Antonio, Tulsa.

Meanwhile, the newspaper industry had become the darling of Wall Street. Dominant dailies were no longer in a hotly competitive, low-profit business. They had become unregulated public utilities. Newspaper stocks soared in the 1970s and early 1980s, and dominant or monopoly newspapers changed hands at escalating prices. Warren Buffett bought the *Buffalo Evening News* in 1977 for $35 million; today, its competition out of business, it is worth several hundred million even in the current slump.

But the party's over. Consolidation brought more than a decade of high profitability but had unintended consequences which are now being felt. It helped alienate the papers from their natural audiences.

Once Congress permitted the dailies to become unregulated monopolies, they were vulnerable to political pressure, especially since so many newspaper owners also held TV licenses; these licenses could be challenged by ambitious or offended groups or politicians. (Just ask Rupert Murdoch). It became in a publisher's interest to become politically correct, to cater to the potentially noisy groups: environmental extremists, homosexuals, radical feminists, advocates of racial and gender quotas, educators. Who needed Jesse Jackson steaming into town threatening a boycott of a paper's advertisers? So the proprietors cowered in their counting-houses while New Class editors molded dailies into a national liberal press.

A decade ago, the famous Rothman/Lichter study measured the political and social allegiances of the media elite, those upholders of "community standards." These were people who voted overwhelmingly for Jimmy Carter in 1980 against Ronald Reagan. More than four out of five thought it was the government's function to redistribute income. They were overwhelmingly against the death penalty and overwhelmingly in favor of quotas for supposedly disadvantaged people. A similar survey taken today would show some differences—Ralph Nader would be less of a hero—but the essential facts about media staffing and media bias remain written across the face of almost every daily newspaper in the United States. In a valedictory note last year a former editor of the *Boston Globe* boasted he had spent his career "abominating Republicans."

Which leaves lots of Americans, who neither abominate Republicans nor support race and gender quotas, listening to Rush Limbaugh instead of reading a daily newspaper.

THE OLD Lenny Bruce joke applies to successful publications: Ask a Californian who he is and he points to his car. Ask many Americans who they are and they might point to the publications on their coffee tables. Magazines with strong personalities help readers define themselves, give them a kind of club to belong to. *Rolling Stone* does that, *Cosmopolitan* does, *The Economist* does, this magazine does. *Reader's Digest* does on a prodigious scale. Somehow the editors reach into the readers' psyches, or into a corner of their psyches.

A few of today's newspapers have this touch. The *New York Times* does for people with a New York sensibility, wherever they live. The *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* relate closely to their readers, too. Thus although these publications face the same advertising problems other dailies do, I believe they will eventually solve the problem by making their readers pay more than they now do for what is, after all, a valuable service.

But the run-of-the-mill metropolitan dailies aren't that special. Intended to be one-size-fits-all they fit nobody. They will probably go the way of the pocket watch and the trolley car. The financial figures support a grim diagnosis for these onetime money ma-

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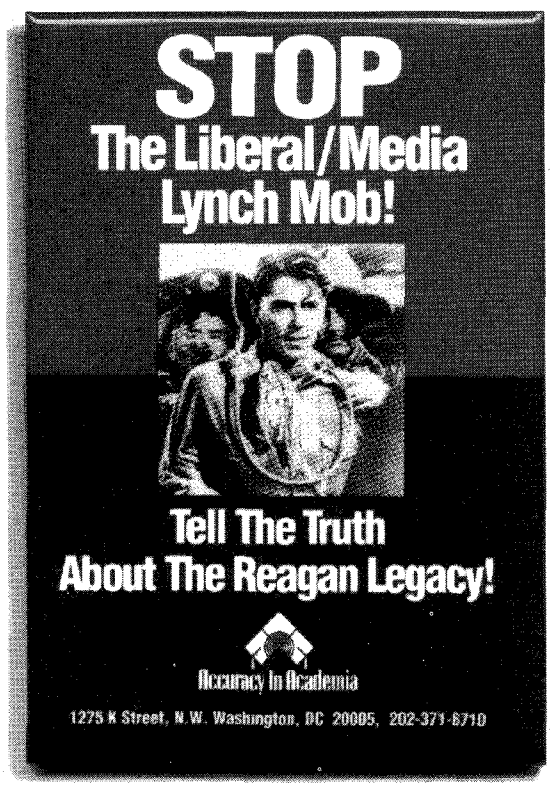
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chines. The big newspaper chains last year mostly showed profits and profit margins well below those of the mid 1980s, and their shares have lagged in the post-1987 bull market. The showings would have been far worse had not the price of their chief raw material, newsprint, collapsed.

For all their focus groups and market research, most U.S. dailies are as out of touch with the public as the Beltway politicians. Americans haven't figured out how to get rid of the politicians, but tens of millions have discovered they can get by quite nicely without a daily paper. □

PC Comes To the Newsroom

DANIEL SELIGMAN

PROPOSITION: The mighty American media have begun moving down the politically correct road long trodden by the colleges, and are doing so for many of the same reasons. The tilt to PC in the press is a sickening phenomenon, and it needs to be distinguished from the merely maddening liberal bias often groaned about by conservatives. Indicia of this bias have been abundant for years. Polling data on reporters, editors, and anchormen have consistently shown such characters to be more liberal than the public as a whole. A carefully crafted survey done by the Center for Media and Public Policy showed that 81 per cent of high-level media folks had voted for George McGovern in 1972 (when he got only 38 per cent of the popular vote).

Content analysis of the big stories over the years also shows persistent liberal biases. One entertaining way to analyze media coverage is to seek out tendentious words and phrases in Nexis, the giant computerized database that now contains searchable articles and transcripts from two thousand publishing and broadcasting organizations. If prodded, for example, Nexis will tell you that during the 1988 presidential campaign, "Quayle" appeared within ten words of "heartbeat" in 240 news stories. In the 1984 campaign, there were only 13 articles similarly linking the H-word to Geraldine Ferraro. During the Reagan–Bush years, media thumbsuckers were regularly reporting on White House skirmishes between the "pragmatists" and the "ideologues." James Baker and later Howard Baker were typically cast as the prags, and a Nexis search of the databases during the Reagan years shows 260 articles in which "Baker" appears within ten words of "pragmatist." The word "Meese" appears in 382 articles within ten words of "ideologue" or "ideological." Thus were readers aided in figuring out who in the White House was behaving rationally.

Media liberalism doubtless provided an ideal environment for the nurturing of political correctness, but PC has in some ways transformed that environment. Now solidly based in scores of newsrooms, it still looks much like its progenitors on campus—a movement driven by truly totalitarian impulses. Its byword continues to be "diversity," a term of art now associated with several different propositions: We need a lot more affirmative action to forestall racism and sexism. We need to promote messages that tout the achievements and elevate the self-esteem of minorities, women, and gays. We need speech codes and sensitivity workshops to ensure suppression of ideas that might offend these groups. A lot of what the political-correctniks are selling just seems laughable, especially the never-ending discoveries of bias built into terms like "waitress" and "blackball." Not so laughable is the genuine pressure created by the movement to flee from the evidence when the conclusion—that minorities have higher crime rates than whites, for example, or that women on average have less mathematical ability than men—is judged politically incorrect.

ONE GOOD reason for worrying about PC filtering into the media is the recent emergence of diversity as a major theme in numerous news organizations. A recent Nexis search asking for all 1992–93 articles mentioning "diversity" within thirty words of "media" or "newsroom" turned up 598 articles. One learns that the *New York Times*, Knight–Ridder, Hearst, Gannett, Chicago's Tribune Co., the *Boston Globe*, the *Seattle Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and others have made increased diversity of the workforce a major priority; many have established diversity committees of one kind or another in their newsrooms. The *Tribune* has told senior managers that their bonuses will be affected by their success in hiring and promoting minorities. *New York Times* advertising revenue has been in a long slide, but new boss Arthur Sulzberger Jr. says "the single most important issue this newspaper faces" is—diversity. Sulzberger gives every indication of being a true believer: the Diversity Task Force set up last year by the *Times* has poked its nose into numerous corners of the enterprise, and the official ideology says that there is a News Case for Diversity: The more diverse staff will do a better job of reporting. Also a Business Case: The *Times* must reach out to the more multicultural markets of the next century. (The capital letters appear in the paper's own statements about diversity.) Judging from reports about the DTF appearing in the *Times* house organ and elsewhere, its members went through a period in which they were not talking to one another. According to the house organ's solemn yet mystifying account of these diversity travails, the big communications breakthrough came only after the task force went off on a two-day retreat in Tarrytown, New York, and its members submitted to a "test that sorted out 16 various personality and functional styles according to a framework developed by Carl Jung." Up from *The Front Page*.

Mr. Seligman is a columnist and former senior editor at Fortune *and the author of* A Question of Intelligence: The IQ Debate in America *(Birch Lane, 1992).*

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Diversity in the media seems to mean exactly what it has always meant on campus. Definition propounded by the *Times* task force: "Diversity is understood to include people of every sex [huh?], race, color, ethnicity, culture, lifestyle, sexual orientation, age, experience and all other characteristics that make individuals unique." As at Harvard, the word refers to differences just about everywhere except in the realm of ideas.

Conventions of editors and publishers these days feature endless chatter about diversity, along with box scores evidencing the degree of success attained by each of the fifty largest newspapers in bumping up its minority proportion. (*USA Today* is the leader, with 20.8 per cent.) The American Society of Newspaper Editors has formally embraced a goal of proportional representation by 2000: By that year, America's newsrooms are supposed to have a minority representation of about 25 per cent, in line with the over-all population percentages. ASNE is obviously not going to meet that goal (the figure today is around 10 per cent), so every year's meeting features expressions of rage and betrayal by groups of minority journalists and of contrite determination by the bosses to do better in the future. Inspiring diversity sentiment of outgoing ASNE president Seymour Topping of the *New York Times*, at the 1992 convention: "We must forge ahead even more strongly."

In a pattern recognizable from the campuses, management's affirmative-action efforts are guaranteed never to reduce the quantity of racism out there. At the December 1992 meeting of the Newspaper Association of America, the president of the National Association of Black Journalists said that newsrooms "are increasingly hostile to minorities," and black journalist Wanda Lloyd of *USA Today* said she regularly gets calls from all over the country complaining about racism and hostility in different organizations. "Go to any minority journalism association meeting," she said, "and you hear that."

Like students on campus, journalists are increasingly divided along racial/ethnic/sexual lines. In addition to the black journalists, there is a National Association of Hispanic Journalists, an Asian American Journalists Association, a Native American Journalists Association, American Women in Radio & Television, the National Federation of Press Women, and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists' Association, all panting to proclaim their victimhood. Lois Lauer Wolfe of the Press Women complains that the newspaper industry is concentrating hiring efforts on minorities, and "what has been left out of the equation is women." Naturally not organized are white males, but it seems that they too have their grievances. A Gannett News Service report recently described a seminar on diversity that took place at an American Press Institute meeting in Reston, Virginia, and turned into a gripe session by non-minority men telling stories about being passed over because of their skin color. Gannett's PC reporter made it clear he was not too sympathetic.

THE MEDIA'S PC problems obviously reflect increased fears in editors' offices that something might be published that would offend the various movements represented in the newsroom. This does seem odd. One might suppose the movements' members would be fearful of jeopardizing the positions they hold, and disinclined to make waves; after all, good jobs in journalism have been scarce for quite a few years. But it doesn't seem to work that way. News stories about rumbles in the newsroom generally leave you with the impression that the disgruntled or furious staff feels it has the moral high ground, while the senior editors nominally in charge look nervous and defensive.

Senior journalists deemed responsible for offending ethnic or sex-related sensibilities have suffered astonishing humiliations in recent years:

—In December 1990, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran an editorial suggesting that young welfare mothers, unable to care for more children, be offered incentives to use Norplant (the contraceptive implant). The proposal was termed "slow genocide" by Vanessa Williams, an instantly enraged *Inquirer* reporter who also happened to be president of the local chapter of the black journalists' association. One *Inquirer* columnist got into print comparing editorial-page editor Dave Boldt to David Duke. In the ensuing row, the paper's senior editors repudiated the editorial; in addition, they expanded the editorial board to include three blacks. Deputy editorial-page editor Donald Kimelman has been quoted as affirming that "in practice . . . we won't write anything on race that doesn't have the support of the board's three black members."

Several weeks later, still stung by the outcries of some of its employees, the *Inquirer* introduced a hiring program explicitly identified as "quotas." The new rule was that henceforth half of all newsroom hires would be minority-group members; in addition, half had to be women. At the same time, the paper introduced training sessions in which all editorial employees were required to be introduced to sensitivity. To be sure, the sessions may have been less mandatory than advertised, as some news stories described rebellious white male employees boycotting them.

—The *Boston Globe*, which has instituted what it calls "race and gender workshops" for its staff, has lately been dealing with a towering problem presented by veteran columnist David Nyhan. It seems that Nyhan humorously disparaged another chap on the staff, applying to him a vulgar, if not obscene, synonym for "henpecked." He was immediately assailed by a female colleague who happened to hear the remark, assailed again in a memo to the staff by editor Matthew Storin ("Remarks that are racially or sexually offensive to co-workers will not be tolerated here"), and fined $1,250 (which the *Globe* said it would contribute to a women's organization). The *Globe* later relented on the fine but Nyhan, by all accounts, is crushed and apologetic.

—The *Los Angeles Times* has made a huge investment in expanding minority editorial employment (now 17.2 per cent of newsroom staff). It has an active diversity committee, charged with reducing racial tensions; it also has a Unity Caucus—an ad-hoc group of minority employees who use the in-house electronic bulletin boards to conduct a running "consciousness-raising" critique of the paper's editorials, landing with thuds on anything judged offensive, and plenty is. The critiques get widely circulated, and I found myself reading one of them in the *Washington Post*. The bulletin-board entry was responding to a *Times* article that said Ghanaian leader Jerry Rawlings had a "reputation for

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personal probity that sets him apart from the rest of the continent's leaders." The in-house response: This was "besmirching the entire continent."

A subsidiary row on the *L.A. Times*, or possibly it is the main point, involved minority staffers who protested when asked to abandon their usual beats and pitch in to cover the May 1992 riots. After much back-and-forth without agreement on the fairness of such assignments, the *Times*, like the

No Sex, No Violence

SEX HAS always sold newspapers. A vicar had been caught with a choirboy; a crazed sex killer had found a new victim; a chorus girl was discovered to be a transsexual. Such stories were reported with varying degrees of prurience, hypocrisy, and sensationalism—but they were reported. Some still are: the "Long Island Lolita" saga of Amy Fisher has been given the full front-page treatment. Increasingly, however, some are not. They appear briefly in a small paragraph on an inside page—then disappear from view. Or if they do get major coverage from one paper or news show, the others never follow up.

For instance, on the evenings of March 2, 3, and 5, viewers of WNBC-TV News in New York saw a harrowing investigative report on NAMBLA (the North American Man–Boy Love Association), a group whose goal, anchorman Chuck Scarborough explained, is "to legally seduce your children." Reported by John Miller, the powerful series showed footage of NAMBLA recruitment sessions, mailings, and other literature, including photographs of undressed boys. Most disturbing was the allegation—backed up by tapes of recruitment sessions—that two senior officials in the organization are veterans of the New York public-school system. One of these men was employed for seven years as the school psychologist at PS 75 in Queens; the other is a longtime faculty member of the elite Bronx High School of Science. The Board of Education, the Inspector General's office, and the school principal have all known about his NAMBLA affiliation since 1985, but parents and students had never been informed.

In a particularly distressing segment, WNBC played the tape of a secret meeting of NAMBLA members in the atrium of the Citicorp building. On the tape, the Bronx High School teacher is heard advising a new, younger member, identified by WNBC as a librarian at George Washington High School, to keep his membership secret until he "has tenure." When a reporter approached the meeting and identified himself, the group dissolved and the men slithered separately away.

Despite ongoing developments, the NAMBLA story dropped from sight like a five-hundred-pound stone. When I asked Gerald Boyd, metropolitan editor of the *New York Times*, why this was so, he responded, "That is a very strange question. All I can say intelligently is that I haven't heard anything about the NBC series, but I mean to." The *Times* has not covered the case subsequently. Mark Kalech of the *New York Post* was also unaware of the story. "We're been busy," he said and promised to look into it. Other media people also professed ignorance. The story has yet to surface.

Nor was this an isolated example. A still more flagrant case involved a 27-year-old, HIV-positive convicted sodomist named Troy Rivara. Rivara had frequently loitered in the schoolyard at Intermediate School 44 on West 77th Street, regaling male students with comments like, "Can I have your butt?" The police had been called at least twice because neighbors were concerned about his many young male visitors. Then last July he was arrested for the abduction and rape of an 11-year-old boy who attended IS 44.

The report of the abduction and rape appeared in the *New York Times*, and there was a lengthy and serious follow-up story by Alessandra Stanley in the *Times* the next day. But *New York Newsday*, the devoutly liberal tabloid, gave it two brisk and incurious summaries, and papers outside the New York area generally gave it a single paragraph in the national roundups.

Yet there were elements of official and interest-group misconduct in this story which would normally have aroused the press's investigative zeal. Why had the police apparently failed to follow up a neighbor's warnings that Rivara was bringing home young boys? Why did the parole officer not object to his moving into an apartment very near two schools, when a condition of his parole was that he stay away from children? Why was there no questioning of the priorities of gay groups which, according to Miss Stanley, "expressed concern that the suspect's right to confidentiality about his infection had been violated by the police"? Parents wanted to know all those things; reporters did not.

Compare this reticence with the sensational treatment and uncritical acceptance given to *charges* of child sex abuse in schools. From the McMartin case in California to Kelly Michaels in New Jersey, the press has been the credulous accomplice of prosecutors peddling stories that are inherently improbable, even impossible, but which are in accord with feminist theories of widespread abuse and the reliability of child witnesses. It took the crusading efforts of one journalist, Dorothy Rabinowitz, to establish the innocence of Kelly Michaels in a long investigative piece published by *Harper's* (after *Vanity Fair* rejected it). Only then did others turn the reporter's boasted skeptical eye on the case, and they came from opinion magazines such as *The Village Voice* and NATIONAL REVIEW—not from the newsrooms of the mainstream press.

It is impossible to make sense of these contradictions without examining the current twists of sexual correctness. Date rape is common, children never lie, homosexuals are just like everyone else—stories that confirm such beliefs are a safe route to journalistic celebrity, even if they turn out to be wrong; stories that undermine them, even if rightly, are too hot to handle. —JAMES MACGUIRE

Mr. MacGuire is a senior fellow at the Center for Social Thought.

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Inquirer, reached for the quota button: It proclaimed that 50 per cent of all new editorial hires would be minority-group members or women.

—In 1986, the *Washington Post* introduced and proudly promoted a redesigned Sunday magazine section. Unfortunately for the grand opening, the first issue contained two problematic features. One was a cover story about a black rap star accused of murder. The second and larger controversy swirled around a column by Richard Cohen noting that many crime-ridden jewelry stores in the District routinely declined to buzz in young black males, and suggesting a certain amount of sympathy for the store managers. The new magazine brought down an avalanche of abuse on Cohen and the *Post*. A Washington Post Magazine Recall Committee (which wanted the magazine abolished) gained the support of the Washington Urban League, the Archdiocese of Washington, numerous local unions, and District Delegate Walter E. Fauntroy. Executive editor Ben Bradlee wrote a formal apology "for the offense that [the articles] inadvertently gave to certain segments of our audience," and (responding to a subsidiary grievance that surfaced when the recall committee got going) also promised that more black models would henceforth appear in the magazine's advertisements. Protestors nevertheless continued dumping thousands of copies of the Sunday magazine on the steps of the *Post* building for several months.

The *Post* itself reported that these shattering events had had an impact on coverage. Signaling that cheerleading time had come, Bradlee said the paper was now searching aggressively for stories "that would reflect the strengths of the community." Magazine editor Jay Lovinger was quoted in the *Post* as saying that his story decisions were now being second-guessed, and it was obvious that the protests were poisoning the atmosphere in which journalistic decisions are made. When the magazine did a feature story on Jeffrey Levitt, an S&L operator who had stolen money, Jewish readers wrote in to complain that the *Post* was now dumping on Jews just to show blacks the paper was impartial.

Okay, all this was seven years ago. But you had better believe memories of those events still haunt the *Post* editors. A 1991 article by its media correspondent, Howard Kurtz, observed with remarkable candor that "creeping self-censorship," especially on racial issues, was a problem at the *Post* (and a lot of other places). He quoted offending columnist Richard Cohen as opining that "there are issues the media just can't discuss."

Actually, that's not quite right. The press is free to discuss any problem under the sun. It gets into trouble only when it serves up politically incorrect solutions.

—*New York Times* in-house legends feature numerous attacks on senior management by the troops, but the 1991 row over Patricia Bowman is hard to top. Miss Bowman is the woman who famously accused young William Kennedy Smith of raping her when she returned with him to the family compound after some late-hour bar-hopping in Palm Beach. Like most papers, the *Times* protects the privacy rights of rape victims and does not use their names in news stories. But after Miss Bowman was named first by a supermarket tabloid and then by NBC, the *Times* decided that the privacy issue was moot: it identified her and in the process told its readers quite a lot about her, including several marginally discreditable details (e.g., the suspension of her driver's license after numerous tickets and unpaid fines).

The publisher was on the rebels' side: Arthur Sulzberger Jr. turned up in the newsroom and gave Anna Quindlen a conspicuous kiss.

Willie Smith ultimately was acquitted of raping Miss Bowman, but in the *Times* newsroom he was guilty as Bluebeard at the time her name was disclosed, and the violation of her already vanished privacy was a high crime. When executive editor Max Frankel showed up for work the next morning, he immediately discerned Sunday Book Review editor Rebecca Sinkler shouting that the paper's behavior was a disgrace. Contemplating petitions and other signs of hysterics, Frankel called a staff meeting in the paper's auditorium. With every seat occupied, he then had to endure prolonged abuse from journalists of every gender; he also had to sit still for an Anna Quindlen column denouncing the *Times* coverage. The logic of the column was bizarre, arguing that the name had been disclosed because the Kennedys are well connected whereas Miss Bowman belonged to the less privileged classes. But *Times* columnists report directly to the publisher, and in this case he was on the rebels' side. Sulzberger turned up in the newsroom and gave Anna a conspicuous kiss. Owing to its progressive etiology, the buss triggered no charges of sexual harassment.

THE STANDARD argument for diversity in journalism is that it expands the organization's reportorial range. Hispanic reporters will be more knowledgeable about what's happening in the barrios, and women in the media will have unique insights into female-related issues. It is a facially plausible story line; in practice, however, one has difficulty pointing to examples. What you see instead are proliferating versions of the Bowman case: of newsroom diversity working to *suppress* ideas and information. The racial/ethnic/sexual "movements" represented in the newsroom are inflexibly PC, and as hinted by the catalogue of humiliations recited above, senior editors do well not to cross them.

My own sense of the matter is that on many issues the press seems entirely capable of overriding its familiar liberal biases. It can surprise you with a series favorable to Dan Quayle (which the *Washington Post* produced last year) or articles suddenly registering skepticism about global warming. Conservatives cannot fairly complain nowadays that the press is giving a free ride to the Clintonites. Still, it has this large problem in the newsroom. What it is increasingly unable to do is offend the movements represented there or even deal with their interests in a reasonably professional manner.

Last year, the American Association of University Women issued a report called *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. The report was a feminist tract masquerading as scholarly research. It argued that teachers systematically demean and undervalue their female

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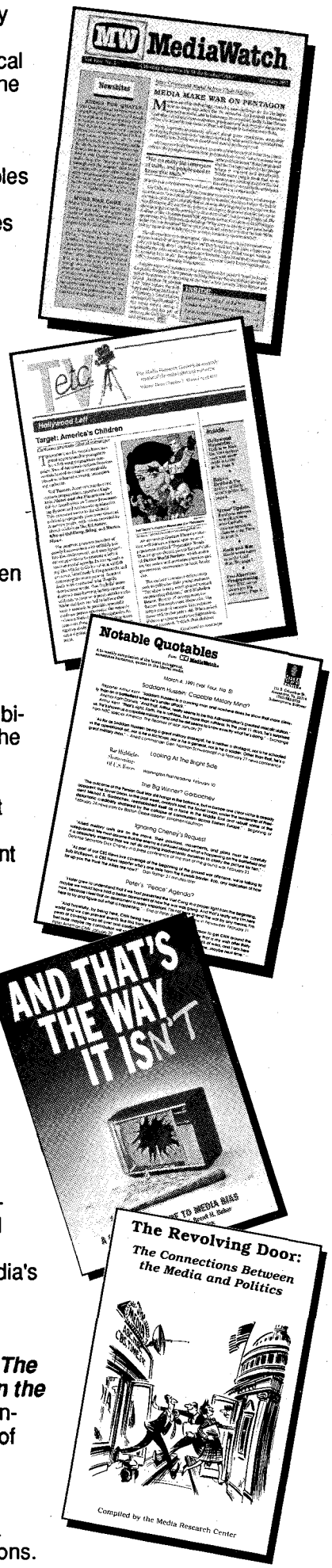
MediaWatch, a monthly newsletter that reviews news coverage of political and current events by the television networks, newspapers and news weeklies. "Newsbites" provide ongoing examples of bias and the "Janet Cooke Award" examines the month's most distorted story. Plus: In-depth studies and analysis.

TV, etc., a monthly newsletter that investigates the liberal issue agenda permeating prime time television, current cinematic fare and record releases and catalogues the off-screen political activities of the Hollywood Left.

Notable Quotables, a bi-weekly compilation of the most outrageous and humorous examples of bias from the media. At year-end the Linda Ellerbee Awards present the best quotes of the year.

And That's the Way it Isn't: A Reference Guide to Media Bias provides 350 pages of summaries, excerpts and reprints of 45 studies that demonstrate the media's liberal bias. A one-stop resource containing all the facts and figures, examples and quotes proving the media's bias.

The Revolving Door: The Connections Between the Media and Politics contains brief biographies of 237 reporters, editors, producers and news executives who have rotated between media jobs and political positions.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students, and that male superiority in math and science reflects this prejudice. As I noted in a *Fortune* column at the time, I checked on only one of the academic studies cited in the whole kvetch and discovered that it said exactly the opposite of what the AAUW authors were representing.

Americans were not well served by accounts of the report. I learn from a Nexis search of newspapers that it was covered by the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Seattle Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, and many more. I also learn that these accounts had certain amazing similarities. All of the publications mentioned ran the story on the front page. All the stories had feminine bylines. Every story was enthusiastically supportive of the AAUW findings, and only two (the *Washington Post* and *San Francisco Chronicle*) had even bothered to check in with scholars who might be expected to register an alternative perspective. When movement interests are involved, cheerleading is the new norm.

Conspicuously so when gay rights are concerned. Polling data show the American people deeply divided over Clinton's proposal to let acknowledged homosexuals serve in the military: A CNN–*USA Today*–Gallup survey in late April showed 50 per cent opposed to the idea, 44 per cent in favor, 6 per cent undecided. No such divisions are discernible in the media, where you see a landslide in favor of Clinton's proposal. A recent Nexis search turned up 47 editorial-page endorsements of the proposal, with only one paper (the *Washington Times*) opposed.

Media coverage of gay-related issues insistently reminds one that much of it is being done by the movement's partisans. The April march in Washington was clearly being covered by reporters on the team. The *Seattle Times* reportage was performed by Lily Eng, a leader of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, whose dispatch noted a mysterious distinction: "As a journalist, I don't consider myself an activist, but as a lesbian." The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* was represented by Jennifer Juarez Robles, who is also active in NLGJA and was one of many gay journalists certifying that the authorities had undercounted participants in the march. The *New York Times* interviewed a sizable number of news executives and reported that virtually all of them said they wouldn't take a reporter's sexual orientation into account in deciding whom to assign to the parade. That seems a bit disingenuous. Anyone wading through many newspaper reports on the march would surely conclude that the issue facing many newsroom assignment editors was whether they *had to* assign a gay or lesbian to the parade. The *Times* itself assigned gay reporter Jeffrey Schmalz, whose hurrahs were unabashed ("the feeling of brotherhood . . . seemed pervasive") and whose report concluded with a judgment at variance with that reached by numerous goggle-eyed C-SPAN viewers: "We're just like everybody else in America."

THE VIEW from the top at the *Times* is that the paper's new perspective on gay-related issues represents another victory for diversity and more inclusive coverage. In a videotaped message to the NLGJA last year, Sulzberger promised that the *Times* would get itself some openly gay senior editors or top managers, and added, clunkily: "I'm convinced that if newspapers are to survive, they can no longer be exclusionary bastions of a single view of the world." In fact, the *Times* now has a single view of gay-related issues: the view of gay partisans themselves. Its reports on these issues have been one long exercise in cheerleading. "Chancellor Fernandez Stands Tall" was the heading over the *Times* editorial when Joe Fernandez suspended a Queens school board that had rebelled against orders to teach acceptance of gays to young children. On this issue, on gays in the military, on the moral right of a gay contingent to march in New York's St. Patrick's Day parade, on the total wonderfulness of the April demonstration in Washington, the paper's coverage has been relentlessly one-sided.

It is unclear how far the media will travel down the PC road. Some of the follies perpetrated by academic groups like, say, the Modern Language Association will almost surely meet more resistance in the media than at Stanford, if only because the media's handiwork is more exposed to public view. One somehow doubts that "womyn" will ever become acceptable usage at the *New York Times*.

But the new diversity-based pressures are real and powerful. David Boldt, editorial-page editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and a conspicuous victim of the pressures, may have had it about right when he grieved in a 1991 interview: "I have this vision of America, with all 250 million of us standing up to our chins in sewage and everyone's saying, 'Don't make waves.'" □

The Media Elite Revisited

TED J. SMITH III

OF all that has been written in the last thirty years about liberal bias in the media, no single work has had a more profound impact than *The Media Elite* by Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda Lichter. Published in 1986, its most dramatic findings derive from a survey, completed in 1980, of 238 journalists randomly selected from America's most influential news organizations: ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

The survey revealed a group of individuals at once remarkably similar to

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one another in background, status, and beliefs and strikingly different from the general public. In 1980, this "media elite" was predominantly white (95 per cent), male (79 per cent), college-educated (93 per cent), and well paid. Four out of five had been raised in relatively affluent business or professional families; two out of three came from states in the Northeast or industrial Midwest.

In terms of beliefs, one distinctive characteristic was a strongly secular outlook. In marked contrast to a 1977 Gallup poll of the general population in which 94 per cent of respondents professed a religious faith, 50 per cent of the elite journalists listed their religion as "none." And while 86 per cent of respondents from the general population said their religious beliefs are very or fairly important to them (and 42 per cent had attended a religious service in the preceding week), an identical 86 per cent of elite journalists said they seldom or never go to church.

But the most significant findings concern political beliefs: 54 per cent of the journalists described their views as left of center, 29 per cent as "middle of the road," and only 17 per cent as right of center. This ratio of more than three liberal journalists for each conservative contrasts sharply with the distribution among the American public: every relevant poll conducted in the decade from 1975 to 1985 found conservatives outnumbering liberals in the electorate, often by a ratio of three to two or more.

Of course, partisan or ideological labels provide only a very rough indication of political orientation. Thus one of the great strengths of the *Media Elite* survey is that it also included several sets of more precise questions about political attitudes and behaviors. One set asked how the journalists had voted in each of the last four presidential elections (i.e., 1964–76). It produced what is now probably the most frequently quoted datum in the media bias debate: Among elite journalists who voted for a major party candidate, support for the more liberal Democratic contender ranged from 81 per cent for McGovern and Carter, to 87 per cent for Humphrey, to a high of 94 per cent for Johnson.

An additional set of questions elicited attitudes on 21 economic, political, and social issues. The responses

"SORRY, MIKE WALLACE, WE HAVE TO PUT YOU ON HOLD!...WE'VE GOT *DAN RATHER, BARBARA WALTERS, TOM BROKAW* AND *TED KOPPEL* ON CALL-WAITING, BUT FIRST A FAX FROM *KATIE COURIC* AND A FOLLOW-UP FAX FROM *PETER JENNINGS!...*"

showed little support for egalitarian socialist economics but strong endorsement of liberal social views in such areas as welfare, affirmative action, environmentalism, and, in particular, individual morality. For example, only 13 per cent of the journalists agreed that large private corporations should be nationalized, while 86 per cent endorsed the statement that "people with more ability should earn higher salaries." Similarly, fully 90 per cent agreed that "it is a woman's right to decide whether or not to have an abortion," while only 25 per cent agreed that homosexual sex is "wrong." Indeed, fewer than half (47 per cent) agreed that adultery is wrong.

The authors also sought to provide insight into the future by conducting a separate survey of students at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, a principal training ground for prospective members of the media elite. They found that while the students were more diverse in race and gender than the existing elite they were even more homogeneous in background and beliefs. In particular, self-described liberals outnumbered conservatives 85 per cent to 11 per cent, a ratio of almost eight to one. The obvious prospect: less political diversity and a further shift to the left.

RESPONSES to *The Media Elite* were intense but largely predictable. Presented with a sophisticated scientific study by respected scholars that strongly supported their complaints, conservatives reacted with something approaching open glee. In contrast, journalists and their liberal supporters fought doggedly to minimize its significance. Some simply dismissed the findings out of hand; others argued that the research described only elite journalists, not the profession as a whole. But the most common response was to assert that, regardless of journalists' private views, their reporting is scrupulously objective and fair.

The argument that elite journalists are unrepresentative of the wider profession is at best only partially relevant. Elite journalists are enormously influential, because their reporting sets the tone and content of coverage in smaller media as well. More important, there is every reason to believe that the argument is false. More than a dozen studies of journalists' attitudes have been conducted since 1980, most by media-related organizations. All have produced very similar findings and all generally support the conclusions of *The Media Elite*.

For example, in a 1985 survey, conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, of 2,703 reporters and editors at 621 daily newspapers, 55 per cent described their views as liberal, 17 per cent as conservative.

Similarly, in a 1988 survey, commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, of 1,200 reporters at 72 randomly selected newspapers, 62 per cent of the respondents said they were "Democrat or liberal" or leaning that way, compared to only 22 per cent who described themselves as "Republican or conservative" or so inclined.

At least five major studies have asked various samples of journalists

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how they had voted in one or more presidential elections between 1964 and 1988. Across all of these studies, the highest level of support recorded for a Republican candidate is 26 per cent (for Ronald Reagan in 1984).

Finally, a 1992 poll of 1,410 journalists from a wide variety of print and broadcast organizations provides clear evidence that journalists are becoming more liberal. Conducted by Indiana University professors David Weaver and Cleveland Wilhoit, the survey found that the number of journalists who identified themselves as Democrats had grown from 35.5 per cent in 1971 to 44.1 per cent in 1992, while the number of Republicans had declined from 25.7 per cent to 16.3 per cent. As the authors note, much of this change is the result of widespread efforts to foster "diversity" in the newsroom. Because female and minority journalists tend to be even more liberal and Democratic than white male journalists, increases in demographic diversity have actually produced substantial decreases in political diversity.

GIVEN overwhelming evidence of the liberal orientation of most journalists, the only remaining question is whether that orientation is reflected in their reporting. Here, too, the answer seems clear.

The Media Elite supplemented its surveys of journalists with three detailed studies of media content. The most sophisticated of these focused on nuclear energy. It combined surveys of four groups—energy scientists, energy engineers, nuclear specialists, and science journalists—with a content analysis of nuclear-energy coverage in seven print and broadcast organs over a period of 14 years. The surveys revealed extensive differences among the four groups, with science journalists much more critical of nuclear energy than the three groups of experts. For example, only 24 per cent of the journalists favored rapid nuclear development, compared to 69 per cent of the nuclear specialists, 70 per cent of the energy scientists, and 80 per cent of the energy engineers. More important, the content analysis showed that both the media coverage and the opinions expressed by the expert sources cited in that coverage tended to reflect the views of the science journalists rather than those of the scientists and engineers.

> "President Bush's new ad portrays Bill Clinton as a big taxer and a danger to the middle class. . . . That's misleading. In fact, Clinton has proposed cutting taxes for the sort of people in this ad. The tax increase that the ad claims could result under Clinton is based on leaps of logic about how he would pay for his promises."
>
> —Lisa Myers, *NBC Nightly News*, October 2, 1992
>
> "Quayle . . . twisted and misstated the facts. . . . Quayle misrepresented Clinton's economic plan, which calls for a net tax increase of only $46 billion spread over four years—the $150 billion Quayle mentioned, minus the $104 billion in cuts he neglected to mention."
>
> —Brooks Jackson, CNN's *Inside Politics*, October 14, 1992

The case for media bias does not depend on any single study, however. The last decade has been marked by a vast outpouring of both systematic and anecdotal evidence of biased coverage across a broad range of topics and media. The sheer volume of this evidence, often provided by widely disparate sources, adds weight to the charge.

For example, independent studies by the conservative Media Research Center (MRC), the nonpartisan Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA), and *Los Angeles Times* reporter David Shaw have all documented clear pro-choice biases in abortion coverage. A 1989 MRC study focused on the labels used to describe the two sides of the abortion debate on network television news during the last four months of 1988. Abortion supporters prefer positive labels such as "pro-choice" or "abortion rights" to describe their views and negative labels such as "anti-abortion" to describe their opponents. Similarly, abortion opponents prefer positive labels such as "pro-life" or "right to life" for their views and negative labels such as "pro-abortion" to describe their opponents. The study found that network reporters used positive labels in 97 per cent of all descriptions of abortion supporters but only 21 per cent of descriptions of abortion opponents.

This pattern was confirmed by a CMPA study of coverage in five major print and broadcast organs during the first eight months of 1989. The CMPA study also documented a slight (53–47 per cent) pro-choice bias in coverage of abortion policy issues. Finally, in a massive five-part series published in July 1990 by the *Los Angeles Times*, David Shaw announced that a "comprehensive" study of major newspaper, television, and news-magazine coverage over the preceding 18 months showed that "the press often favors abortion rights in its coverage."

Additional definitive evidence of media bias comes from coverage of the 1992 presidential election campaign. Every systematic study reported to date has found that journalists were far more critical of Bush and the Republicans than of Clinton and the Democrats. For example, the CMPA conducted an exhaustive analysis of all network television news coverage from January 1, 1992, through election day. It found that 41 per cent of all on-air evaluations of Clinton were positive compared to 32 per cent for Bush.

Even journalists concur. *Washington Post* ombudsman Joann Byrd examined all of her newspaper's campaign pictures, headlines, and news stories for a 73-day period ending on election day. She found that Bush was depicted positively in 175 of these news "elements" and negatively in 184, while Clinton was depicted positively in 195 and negatively in 52. She also found that 58 per cent of the elements about Bush on the front page of the *Post* were negative, compared to only 28 per cent for Clinton.

Other evidence comes from a survey of 250 print and broadcast journalists conducted in October 1992 by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press. It found that 55 per cent of the respondents thought "George Bush's candidacy" had been "hurt by the way the press has covered him" while 3 per cent thought his candidacy had been helped by the press. In contrast, 36 per cent thought press coverage had helped Bill Clinton's candidacy, compared to only 11 per cent who thought it had hurt.

In short, by any reasonable standard, the case for widespread bias in reporting has been made. This does not imply, as some members of the press seem to imagine, that journalists have been found guilty of consciously slant-

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ing the news to make it conform with their ideological perspectives. While this may occur on occasion, what is more common—and more insidious—is the sort of bias that reflects the unconscious assumptions of the writer. This emerges in such things as the kind of adjectives he employs, the kind of "experts" he quotes, the kind of organizations he considers authoritative, and the kind of issues he thinks important.

Such unconscious bias would not be a concern in a newsroom marked by diversity of opinion, because conservatives would tend to check the prejudices of liberals, and vice versa. When, however, the media elite is monolithically liberal, as all the studies confirm it to be, then journalists in the newsroom reinforce rather than correct each other's biases. They eventually come to confuse their *opinions* with external reality. This was illustrated in many reports of the Los Angeles riots, where the "rage" of the rioters was described as if it were an actual event like a fire or a robbery, when it was in fact a liberal interpretation of the rioters' motives, which might equally well have been greed, opportunism, or high spirits. □

Hold the Arts Page

HILTON KRAMER

IT WAS inevitable, perhaps, that the decline in cultural literacy, which is now a chronic condition of the so-called educated classes in this country, would sooner or later result in a drastic deterioration of standards in cultural journalism. What began, a decade or so ago, as a worry about what readers could be counted upon to know or understand about culture past and present has developed into a question about the editors and writers, including in some cases the critics themselves, who can no longer be counted upon to know or understand the essentials of their subject.

> "Of all the aides surrounding Clinton, Stephanopoulos is the one everybody seems eager to learn more about these days, partly because of his new-found power and attractiveness but also because he seems to have more depth and complexity. Here is the student of theology making a living in the spiritual void of inside politics. Here is the cheerful countenance with the brooding soul. Here is a fellow who looks so young and dresses so hip yet behaves with such maturity."
>
> —David Maraniss, *Washington Post*, November 23, 1992

What currently passes for expert knowledge in these quarters is often little more than a general disposition to downgrade language and standards, follow the fashions of the day, and impose upon cultural coverage a Left-liberal political slant.

Even those of us who saw all this coming years ago scarcely dreamed that the devastation would be so rapid, so complete, or so political in character. The speed with which even major newspapers and magazines have hastened to "dumb down" their coverage of books and the arts has been shocking even to pessimists like myself. Criticism and feature writing of a kind that was still welcome in the mainstream media's coverage of the arts ten or fifteen years ago is now rejected as too esoteric and "elitist" to be allowed public expression; and negative criticism, except where politically called for by the Left, is severely frowned upon. All distinctions between high and low culture, including outright trash, are considered too invidious to be given a hearing.

The priority lately accorded the lowest forms of popular culture and media entertainment at the expense of literature and the fine arts in the "quality" press is now so advanced that it amounts to a cultural revolution. So does the politicization of reviewing, where the tenets of political correctness and multiculturalism are now regularly substituted for criteria of aesthetic judgment. It is not only that writers of critical opinion are discouraged from making reference to what used to be common knowledge. Many publications have now succumbed to the belief that thoughtful allusions to the classic achievements of Western culture are in themselves somehow invidious. After all, they may be threatening to the self-esteem of readers, especially if the readers in question can claim some minority or victim status. Everywhere the level of journalistic discourse is lowered in the name of some higher social virtue.

ALAS, it pains me to say that my own professional alma mater, the *New York Times*, where I labored for nearly 17 years to upgrade its arts coverage, is now the outstanding example of this decline. In the paper's arts pages it has become a settled policy to give priority to pop music, television garbage, Hollywood gossip, and the inanities of show business, over coverage of high art. Indeed, art and classical music have been the casualties of a reverse-discrimination policy at the *Times*. Except for news about auction prices and other art-market matters, there is virtually no coverage of the New York art world, which, despite a silly report to the contrary recently in the *New York Times Magazine*, is still the most important in the world. The space devoted to reviews of gallery exhibitions is now so abridged that even major artists are often passed over in silence or dispatched in a few lines, never mind the newcomers whose work is never even looked at if it does not conform to some current political/sexual/racial trend. However, no opportunity is lost to lavish space and praise on the cultural activities of "minority" groups, some of whom are actually a good deal larger and more powerful than the ranks of the serious painters and sculptors who really do constitute an endangered minority on today's cultural scene.

As for the *New York Times Book Review*, it is now established practice for

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serious books to be ignored while commercial hacks and authors of politically correct tracts are heaped with fulsome praise. Indeed, there are weeks when the front pages of the *Book Review* sound like nothing so much as the sessions of the radical feminists' caucus at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. And as the "diversity" chorus sings its hallelujahs in unison week after week, literary intelligence—never exactly in abundant supply in this quarter—is quietly consigned to oblivion.

The weekly magazines are often no better. Consider the lugubrious fate of *The New Yorker* under Tina Brown. I was never a fan of the old *New Yorker*, whose politics—long before the age of political correctness—seemed to me the quintessence of radical chic. Remember *The Greening of America*, *The Fate of the Earth*, and all those other lachrymose five-part homilies we were treated to by William Shawn? No, it won't do to sentimentalize the old *New Yorker*, which for decades after 1963 often read like weekly memoranda exchanged by members of the Kennedy government-in-exile.

The magazine's cultural columns were vastly overrated, too. Could anyone ever finish one of those pedantic, soporific reviews by Andrew Porter? Could you take George Steiner seriously after he had accused Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn of "moral indecency" for comparing the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany? I couldn't. There was Arlene Croce, to be sure, as there had once been Edmund Wilson. But otherwise *The New Yorker* was the last place in the world where you would ever expect to read about an artist or a book you did not already know all about. It was a bad sign when Pauline Kael, with her penchant for extolling the virtues of trashy movies, became the star of the show, for it produced a younger generation of mini-Kaels who spread the gospel of "good" trash to papers far and wide.

Still, compared to the malign rubbish that is now served up as reportage and criticism in Tina Brown's *New Yorker*, Shawn's could at least make claim to a certain civility. It was often wrong-headed, but it wasn't vicious or vulgar. Everything about the magazine is now corrupt: its graphics, its language, its politics, even its standard of proofreading. (There are also weeks when, owing to those disgusting scent ads, it literally stinks.) Above all, it has set a new low in journalistic ethics by its concealment of the offstage conflicts of interest that so often lie behind its more aggressive editorial features. Tina Brown has performed the remarkable feat of combining in a single magazine the worst features of *Vanity Fair*, *The Nation*, *The Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*, while extinguishing the last traces of civility from its editorial columns. One's heart goes out to the remaining old-timers who, with no place else to go, still strive to keep up appearances while everything they cherished in the magazine is being systematically trashed.

It is not a pretty picture, but this is what has happened to cultural journalism in the "quality" press. In some publications (*The Nation*, for example) it is often worse, while in others (*The*

A Modest Subculture

THE LATEST pronunciamento of Alex Ross, the *New York Times*'s newest (and by far youngest) critic, about the state of music explains more than something important about music criticism today. It also explains where music lovers and musicians stand in the esteem of their journalistic betters.

Last January the Harvard-educated Ross used a Sunday column in the *Times* to tell us that the future of classical music—if it had any at all—lay with the likes of Leon Botstein, New York's most loquacious conductor. For Ross, Mr. Botstein's services to music lay not just in his lecturing the audience, or in his choice of often trivial repertory. They really lay in the possibility that he may be able to cultivate in the young "a nontraditional vision of the musical past that emphasizes links between music and society, between music and other cultural disciplines [as an example, Ross has earlier cited Père Ubu's "Thirty Seconds over Tokyo"] in which the younger generation is better schooled."

Now, in the *Times* of May 19, Ross seems to have decided that the battle for the survival of classical music on anything like the old terms has been lost. In analyzing the decline of New York's once-flourishing debut recital scene, he points to the new public's attitudes toward great music:

> Many in the musical world claim that shrinking press coverage has destroyed the debut recital, and has damaged other institutions as well. This logic has a certain force, but it also confuses cause and effect. The press cannot prop up what the public does not support. Nefarious agents are easy to blame, but the reality is harder to accept: classical music has become a modest subculture, competing in a marketplace of differentiated tastes.

Everyone has his right to grand new classifications of culture; the record of such attempts is pretty poor. But what is clear is that far from being a "modest subculture," classical music, in the form of its greatest masterpieces—written from, say, the Renaissance to the mid twentieth century—does more than retain a large audience at concerts, sell CDs, and form an irresistible attraction for the upwardly mobile elements of Asian societies. More important, it still encompasses, in a form recognizable even in the most trashy popular hits, the guiding aural ideals of Western civilization.

To talk of classical music as a "modest subculture" is to imply that such other guiding ideals of civilization as Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, just because they do not infest the popularity charts that seem to determine so much of the *Times*'s coverage, just because it takes some effort and schooling to appreciate them, are also modest subcultures. On the contrary, they, and classical music along with them, are the lodestars of man's achievement on this planet—whether or not they happen to be in fashion at any one moment.

Perhaps it's really the *New York Times* that is a modest subculture.

—SAMUEL LIPMAN

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New Republic) it is occasionally better; though it was *The New Republic*, come to think of it, that first changed the priorities of cultural journalism when, many years ago, it decided to lead off its arts pages not with a literary article but with a movie column. Maybe that was where the rot first set in. □

Beltway Journalism

TERRY EASTLAND

ANY DESCRIPTION of Washington journalism today must begin with its peculiar rules of engagement. Everyone knows what it means to say something is "on the record," but especially since Watergate—and in particular "Deep Throat," identity still unknown—that is a boring, if honorable, place for someone to be.

Brit Hume, the ABC White House correspondent, once told me that as a beginning reporter working in a town far from the Beltway he never heard the term "background." But in Washington, "background" (and variations thereon) is the fashion. To be on background means you can use what I say but don't attribute it to me by name—use some other description of me. It is on background, for example, that "a senior White House official" (in fact, the Chief of Staff) will speak to a roomful of reporters, and it is on background that "a senior Administration official" (in fact, a Cabinet secretary or undersecretary) will do the same.

Then there is "deep background." This means you can use what I tell you but don't attribute the stuff even to a generic name—use the passive voice. Thus does a network anchor intone, "It has been learned that . . ." "Deep background" leaves a consumer of news clueless as to the source—and thus unable to evaluate its validity.

THE source–reporter relationship is at the heart of Washington journalism, and it is the frequent use of anonymous sources that leads to the many "who's-up-and-who's-down" stories that pass for "news" from Washington. For example, during his tenure as CIA director, William Webster was the subject of an unflattering front-page *Washington Post* piece exclusively reliant on unnamed sources, some of whom wanted him fired. (He kept his job.) The anonymous source empowers the journalist, both because no one else is able to check out these unnoted footnotes, and because it is the journalist who makes public what otherwise would not be. Media power must be reckoned with by practical politicians, who cannot afford to think in terms of only legislative, executive, and judicial power.

Recognizing the problems of anonymous sourcing, some news organizations, such as the Washington bureau of the *Wall Street Journal*, have tried to limit use of other than on-the-record sources. But only *USA Today*, headquartered in Arlington, has had much success (perhaps its stories would be longer if anonymous sourcing were allowed). In 1991 the *Washington Post*'s Bob Woodward, who with Carl Bernstein made the legendary contact with Deep Throat, published his most recent best-seller, *The Commanders*. Woodward said that "nearly all" of the more than four hundred people he interviewed spoke on "deep background." Indeed, the few that apparently spoke on the record he must have "lowered" to "deep background," as no source is identified in either the text or the notes. If so, *The Commanders* represents the latest evolution of current journalistic fashion: an entire book with no one on the record!

It's a mistake to think Washington journalists are passive recipients of leaks; usually, they search for sources and, having found them, work them for whatever they can get. However, once a source trusts the reporter, communication becomes much easier. Such was the case in 1987 when "sources" leaked to Nina Totenberg word of Douglas Ginsburg's years-ago pot smoking (which kept him from the Supreme Court) and in 1991 when "sources" leaked to both Miss Totenberg and *New York Newsday*'s Timothy Phelps word of Anita Hill's sexual-harassment charge against Clarence Thomas.

These leaks were aimed at taking down a presidential nominee. Although leaks are also aimed at influencing policy decisions, especially within the White House and the executive departments and agencies, the often lengthy process of nomination and confirmation seems especially conducive to leaks. Recall John Tower, President Bush's initial pick to head the Defense Department (the Senate rejected his nomination), and Tim Ryan, Bush's choice to head the Office of Thrift Supervision (the Senate approved him). The leaks against Tower concerned wine and women, the leak against Bryan his years-ago cocaine use. There is a pattern here: Leaks against nominees typically concern their personal lives.

Already a leak has struck down a Clinton nominee, the leak to David Johnston of the *New York Times* about Zoë Baird. Still, it is an open question whether any of these reporters will be receptive to leaks by Republican Senate staffers and conservative interest groups seeking to defeat Mr. Clinton's choice to replace Justice Byron White. It might be useful to have something to leak if only to test the ideological and professional temperature of such as Mr. Phelps and Miss Totenberg (who, by the way, hugged the left-wing activist Lani Guinier after the latter was announced as Clinton's choice to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division).

The Anita Hill story revealed a type of news that the Washington press corps is not inclined to pursue: the source of a leak. The Senate thought the question important enough that it commissioned a New York lawyer, Peter Fleming, to find out who had leaked Miss Hill's charge. But the press closed ranks against discovering who had leaked, ridiculing Mr. Fleming's effort and barely noticing his fascinating report. For her part, Miss Totenberg destroyed a document that

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Mr. Fleming determined had "originated from the Senate," and she and Mr. Phelps both refused to talk about their sources. Media power proved intimidating: the Senate Rules Committee declined to use available power to try to compel the reporters' testimony.

IN THE ongoing culture war in which the Bork and Thomas nominations were major battles, the Washington press corps often displays a remarkable insularity and in some cases outright prejudice. In 1990 pro-life forces drew between 200,000 and 600,000 marchers for a Rally for Life. The *Post* "covered" the event in a 16-inch Metro story. I asked the *Post*'s then–managing editor, Leonard Downie, to explain the virtual noncoverage. A culture gap, he told me, as his reporters didn't know anyone in the pro-life movement. Whom *do* they know? People in the environmental and abortion-rights movements. (Some reporters have taken part in abortion-rights marches.) Earlier this year the *Post*'s culture gap produced an inaccurate portrayal of the "religious right" when reporter Michael Weisskopf wrote that "followers" of "fundamentalist leaders" were "largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command." The *Post*'s subsequent correction did not close its culture gap or eliminate the paper's politically correct approach to news: the April gay-rights march received such sanitized coverage that the *Post*'s media critic, Howard Kurtz, was compelled to criticize it.

Among the most important facts about the Washington press corps is its intense focus on the President and the White House. As a result, the rest of the executive establishment and Capitol Hill often receive less attention than they merit. The press came late to the savings-and-loan scandal, and the race-norming commenced in the Reagan Labor Department in 1981 was not reported until 1990. More recently, while the press covered the confirmation hearing on Friend-of-Bill-and-Hillary Webster Hubbell, nominated to be associate attorney general, it failed to cover the at least as important hearing on Drew Days, now confirmed as solicitor general. In that hearing, Days, a potential Supreme Court choice, said, among other interesting things, that he disagreed with *Bowers* v. *Hardwick*, the 1986 decision declining to extend the unenumerated right of privacy to include homosexual sodomy.

The Washington press corps has a paradoxical attitude toward the Presidency. On the one hand, it assigns to the President the job of curing almost every conceivable ill. This attitude is a product of progressive liberalism, dating to the Presidencies of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. This attitude can hurt a President who rejects such an understanding of the Presidency (George Bush) just as it can help a presidential candidate who embraces it (Bill Clinton). On the other hand, the press does not genuflect before even liberal Presidents: it is institutionally skeptical, even at times cynical. Camelot is ancient history; Vietnam and Watergate have intervened. What the press builds up it can help tear down, using its methods of choice, including Deep Throats. Mr. Clinton must hope he does not have too many such throats within his Administration. □

The Rise of Style

JOSEPH SOBRAN

MOST people in Washington read the news sections of the *Washington Post* each morning. But *everyone* reads the Style section—a joyous daily bundle of gossip, personal profiles, essays, reviews, short pieces on psychology and family life, and *Doonesbury*. Did I mention humor? It's there too. Not as a separate feature (unless you're old enough to count Art Buchwald as humor—and why not Herblock while you're at it?) but a sauce to all the dishes.

The Style section has talent galore. Tom Shales writes brilliant TV reviews, Henry Allen super essays, Jonathan Yardley book reviews, and there is a strong lineup of critics and reporters: Lloyd Grove, Rita Kempley, Hal Hinson, Megan Rosenfeld, Joseph McLellan, Lloyd Rose, Charles Truehart, and, of course, Miss Manners.

But the best features of the Style section are its long, long profiles of the successful, controversial, or somehow interesting man or woman *du jour*—politicians, writers, actors, activists, or just people with peculiar obsessions, like the impecunious amateur Shakespeare scholar who slept on grates in Washington just so he could live near the world-famous Folger Shakespeare Library.

All the people the *Post* profiles are studies in contemporary manners and attitudes. But their political views are nearly always part of the picture. As Henry Allen wrote in one especially fine and funny essay, politics has ceased to mean fat guys smoking cigars in the back room: today, *everything* is political—what you wear, what you eat, even how you make love. Politics has become inseparable from style, fashion, entertainment, etiquette, and general self-presentation.

"Any man of education would rather be called a scoundrel than accused of deficiency in *the graces*," said Dr. Johnson. Hence the Style section, as true a part of the Ben Bradlee legacy as the famous victory of Watergate.

A successful newspaper should delight and instruct. But until Bradlee, who launched the section in the late Sixties, a "serious" paper was supposed to stick to instructing, and leave delight to the tabloids.

The forbidding exemplars of serious journalism in those days—the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*—didn't carry features like comics, horoscopes, gossip columns. If they found it necessary to refer to popular culture, they'd make a point of explaining who "Mr. Presley" was, on the flattering presumption that he was beneath the notice of the *Times* reader, who might not even own a TV. (Conversely, you might feel slightly sheepish if you *did* know. If you happened to be dining with a *Times* editor, you'd be careful not to refer familiarly to "Elvis.")

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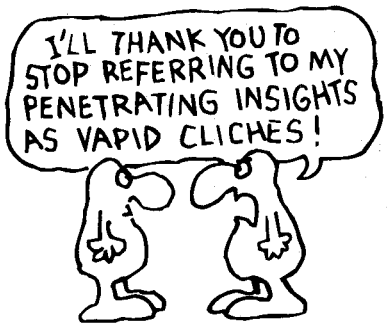
A chief source of the pleasure of the Style section is its tone of intimacy with its readers, of Baby Boomer *Gemeinschaft*. The assumed "we" of its writers is a generation united by a rock-and-Hollywood, Vietnam-and-Watergate patrimony. It is taken for granted that "we" have all been to college and are liberals—probably liberals who work in government.

You'd have expected the Style section to originate in New York City, not Washington. But the many New York papers (now down to four) had traditionally divided the labor of reportage. The *Times* was the "official" paper, while rags like the *Post* and the *Daily News* catered to disreputable interests the lofty *Times* wouldn't even acknowledge, and in a slangy tone the *Times* avoided like the plague (the *News* headlined an account of a rape by an escapee from an insane asylum "Nut Screws and Bolts").

Now, though, the *Times* is trying to catch up with the *Washington Post* in sassy New Journalism. Not only has it added its own Style section (billed as "Styles of the Times"), but even its front page has begun to feature once-unthinkable "soft" stories, such as Maureen Dowd's brilliantly catty rundown of Kitty Kelley's Nancy Reagan bio two years ago. But the *Times* has not yet got the knack, which the *Post*'s Style section has brought to perfection, of maintaining a tone of cheery irony about everything.

Well, almost everything. You can't be ironic, or even less than reverential, about abortion. When the city was invaded by Hollywood actresses for an abortion-rights march in 1989, the Style section interviewed them about their own abortions. The tone was one of moral envy. You got the impression that anyone who carried a child to term was missing one of life's central experiences. It goes without saying that no pro-lifer could qualify for Style-section empathy.

Hillary Clinton is a more surprising object of reverence. She is, after all, a politician as much as a politician's wife, and thus a proper recipient of the Style section's ironic condescension. But a May profile by Martha Sherrill went ga-ga over the First Lady's "politics of meaning" speech, quoting with primitive awe such deep thoughts as "It's not going to be easy redefining who we are as human beings in this postmodern age." The piece was



packed with such grad-school words as *metaphysical*, *evolution*, *transcendental*, *dichotomy*, *dialectic*, and of course *meaningful*.

Miss Sherrill asked Mrs. Clinton if the government is really supposed to do something about spiritual hunger. "Of course not. But there are things that government can do that are more likely to create a condition for more people to be secure enough to take responsibility for themselves and therefore participate fully in this search for meaning." We need, she said, "a new way of looking at the world."

Such New Age blather reminds one that the Clintons aren't so much a Presidency as an alternative lifestyle—and, as such, made to order for the Style section, which can now feel that two of its own are occupying the White House. One detects even a note of generational pride in the section's attention to the First Couple, with their fondness for rock, progressive politics, single child, discreetly open marriage, and generally raised consciousness. You can imagine Bill or Hillary *writing* for the Style section. Could that be said of Ron and Nancy, or George and Bar? Don't be silly!

Tom Wolfe wrote of the New Journalism that it departs from the old in its use of "novelistic techniques," particularly the eye for "status detail." Henry Allen, who edits the Style section, is an ardent admirer, even an imitator, of Wolfe's prose, right down to the spectacular punctuation of early Wolfe; he cultivates in the section a standup comedian's awareness of the little things, once almost beneath polite attention, that define one's place in society.

As a result, reading it is like getting a delicious account of a party you missed the night before, and feeling that maybe the summary is better than the party was. And Allen even keeps the section's liberalism under reasonable control—not exactly noncommittal or poker-faced, but at least aware of the dangers of excess. Ideology is refined into manners and amusement. Was liberalism ever so much fun? Was *abortion*? □

It Didn't Start With *Dateline NBC*

WALTER OLSON

AN "electronic *Titanic*"—as Howard Rosenberg of the *Los Angeles Times* called it—"an unprecedented disaster in the annals of network news, and perhaps the biggest TV scam since the Quiz Scandals." To many, NBC's *Dateline* fiasco seemed a freak, a bizarre departure from accepted network standards. Would any half-awake news organization have helped stage a crash test that was rigged to get a particular outcome? Or concealed from the public key elements—the hidden rockets, the over-filled tank, the loose gas cap? Or entrusted its judgment to axe-grinding "experts" who were deeply involved in litigating against the exposé's target? Or, after questions came up, refused to apologize no matter how strong the evidence grew?

NBC was a latecomer to the safety-exposé game, and had come under cost-cutting pressure. Maybe it lacked the

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high-minded public spirit and adequate research budget that was said to typify perennial Emmy-bait series like *60 Minutes* (CBS) and *20/20* (ABC). And indeed, both CBS and ABC put out word that "their standards forbid the sort of staging that got NBC into trouble," to quote a second *L.A. Times* reporter.

If you think so, read on. An investigation of past network auto-safety coverage reveals that both CBS and ABC have run the same sorts of grossly misleading crash videos and simulations, withheld the same sorts of material facts about the tests, and relied on the same dubious experts with the same ties to the plaintiff's bar. In at least one documented case—another is rumored—viewers were shown a crash fire and explosion without being told it had been started by an incendiary device. *Dateline* committed many journalistic sins. But not least was that it couldn't even manage to be original.

IN JUNE 1978, at the height of the Ford Pinto outcry, ABC's *20/20* reported "startling new developments": evidence that full-size Fords, not just the subcompact Pinto, could explode when hit from behind. The show's visual highlight was dramatic. Newly aired film from tests done at UCLA in 1967 by researchers under contract with the automaker showed a Ford sedan being rear-ended at 55 mph and bursting into a fireball.

"ABC News has analyzed a great many of Ford's secret rear-end crash tests," confided correspondent Sylvia Chase. And they showed that if you owned a Ford—not just a Pinto, but many other models—what happened to the car in the film could happen to you. The tone was unrelentingly damning, and by the show's end popular anchorman Hugh Downs felt constrained to add his own personal confession. "You know, I've advertised Ford products a few years back, Sylvia, and at the time, of course, I didn't know and I don't think that anybody else did that this kind of ruckus was going to unfold." You got the idea that he would certainly think twice before repeating a mistake like that.

If ABC really analyzed those UCLA test reports, it had every reason to know why the Ford in the crash film burst into flame: there was an incendiary device under it. The UCLA testers explained their methods in a 1968 report published by the Society of Automotive Engineers, fully ten years before the *20/20* episode. As they explained, one of their goals was to study how a crash fire affected the passenger compartment of a car, and to do that they needed a crash fire. But crash fires occur very seldom; in fact, the testers had tried to produce a fire in an earlier test run without an igniter but had failed. Hence their use of the incendiary device (which they clearly and fully described in their write-up) in the only test run that produced a fire.

The "Beyond the Pinto" coverage gives plenty of credit to the show's on- and off-screen expert, who "worked as a consultant with ABC News on this story, and provided us with many of the Ford crash-test records." His name was Byron Bloch, and his role as an ABC News consultant was to prove a longstanding one; over the years he brought the network seven different exposés on auto safety, two of which won Emmys.

If the name is familiar, it's because the very same Byron Bloch starred as NBC's on-screen expert in the ill-fated *Dateline* episode. Bloch was present at the Indiana crash scene, and defended the tests afterward. ("There was nothing wrong with what happened in Indianapolis," he told Reuters. "The so-called devices underneath the pickup truck are really a lot of smoke that GM is blowing to divert you away from the punitive damages in the Moseley case.") And he played a key role in assuring NBC the truck fire had been set off by a headlight filament, providing a crucial excuse for not mentioning the igniters. (A later analysis for GM found the fire had started near the igniters, not the headlights.)

In 1978, as in 1992, Bloch wore two hats. One was as paid or unpaid network consultant, advisor, and on-screen explainer. The other was as the single best-known expert witness hired by trial lawyers in high-stakes injury lawsuits against automakers.

After NBC's downfall, *60 Minutes* executive producer Don Hewitt was all over the media proclaiming that such things were unheard of at *his* show. "If that had happened at *"60 Minutes,"* he said of NBC's failure to disclose the rocket use, "I'd be looking for a job tomorrow." Hewitt claimed not even to know why NBC might have wanted to plant the rockets. "I can't for the life of me figure out why anybody would do that," he said on *Crossfire*. "It's not something anybody at *60 Minutes* would do."

'It's not something anybody at 60 Minutes *would do,' said Don Hewitt. Which, in context, is a sort of Gary Hart Memorial Dare. Shall we take it up?*

Which, in context, can be read as a sort of Gary Hart Memorial Dare. Shall we take it up?

In December 1980, *60 Minutes* reported that the small army-style "CJ" Jeep was dangerously apt to roll over—not only in emergencies but "even in routine road circumstances at relatively low speeds." A Jeep is shown crashing. "We'll get to precisely what the conditions were that made that single-car accident happen in a moment," promises Morley Safer.

The footage, it seems, is of tests run by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and was produced in collaboration with a CBS film crew. It shows Jeeps going through what appear from a distance to be standard maneuvers. Safer describes the first. "It is something called a J-turn: a fairly gentle right-hand turn that a driver might make if he was going into a parking lot." The Jeep flips over. Safer concedes that "it does not happen every time," and a good thing too, since if it did the nation's parking lots would be cluttered with overturned

"It's really remarkable because the American people do now associate Bill Clinton with higher taxes . . . he hasn't made the case of what they're getting in return. The fact is that this is the first President in a generation who had the guts to do something about deficit reduction and to take on health care, and he's somehow not selling that. He's still being perceived as an old-style Democrat."

—NBC White House reporter Andrea Mitchell, *Meet the Press*, May 2, 1993

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Jeeps spinning their wheels helplessly like so many ladybugs.

The camera then shows a second test run, "an evasive maneuver, as if the driver is trying to avoid something on the road." An unwanted object is shown obstructing a roadway, lending a you-are-there touch. "The driver would pull out of his lane to the left, go around the obstacle, then pull back to the right into his lane," explains Safer. The Jeep flips over again. Dummy occupants, outfitted in plaid shirts and farmer caps, tumble out to their doom.

Now by this point even trusting viewers might have felt a gnawing canker of doubt. Jeeps may be awkward, hard-to-control vehicles, but do they really do that? After all, skillful stunt drivers can tip over many sorts of vehicles on purpose. Chrysler/AMC, which makes the Jeep, sends out a tape in which this trick is performed on various stock cars and trucks, including a Toyota Corolla, a Ford Bronco, and a Datsun 4 × 4 pickup.

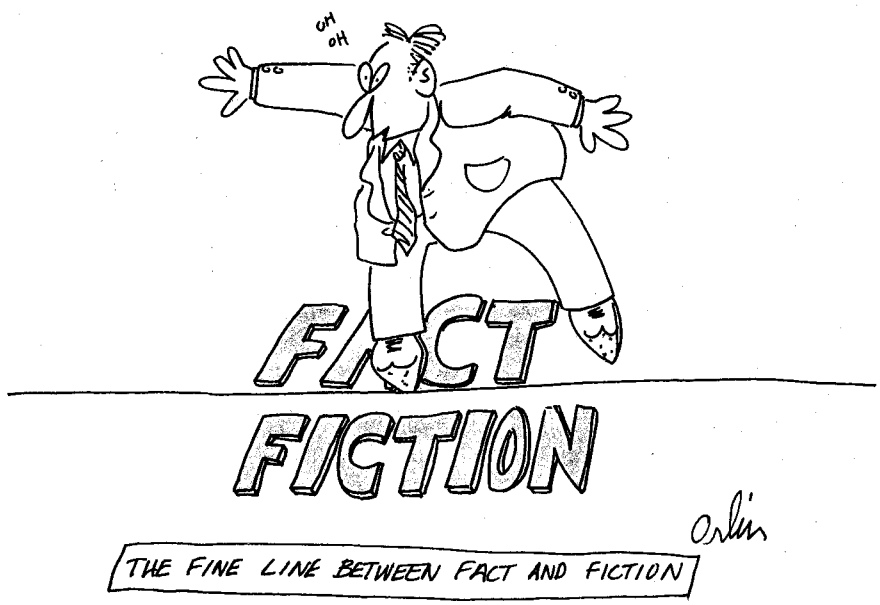
Tantalizingly, Safer seems to share or at least foresee these same doubts. He chats with two guests from the Insurance Institute. "I'm trying to think of some of the things that AMC would accuse you of doing if they were here watching these tests along with us. For example, putting the vehicle through the sort of turns and the sort of stresses that it just would never be put through in normal real-world driving on the road." The guests are reassuring, if that is the right word: yes, the test conditions "do occur in the real world," at least "in panic situations." AMC, for its part, is quoted as saying it suspects the tests of being "contrived to make the Jeep turn over." But the detail stops there.

Too bad. Viewers might have profited by knowing, for example, that testers had to put the Jeeps through 435 runs to get 8 rollovers. A single vehicle was put through 201 runs and accounted for 4 of the rollovers. Make a car skid repeatedly, Chrysler says, and you predictably degrade tire tread and other key safety margins.

Was the J-turn, or for that matter the evasive maneuver, "fairly gentle"? The Jeep was occupied by robot drivers that were twisting the steering wheel through more than 580 degrees of arc, well over one and a half full turns of the steering wheel. (Do not, repeat *not*, try this cruising in your own vehicle.) More striking yet was how fast and hard they jerked the steering wheel: in one case, at a rate in excess of five full turns a second. A study for GM, apparently unrelated to the Jeep affair, found that average drivers' maximum steer rate in emergencies reaches 520 degrees/second, while expert drivers can reach 800; rates above 1,000 degrees/second seem to happen mostly when drivers lose control. The robots used rates of from 1,100 to 1,805 degrees/second in the obstacle-avoidance maneuver. They were also gunning the accelerator—not what you or I might do if a crate of hens suddenly fell in front of us on the highway. (An Insurance Institute internal memo had proposed arranging variables "to ensure rollover.")

Emmy-winning *60 Minutes* segment in March 1981 revealing how the most common type of tire rim used on heavy trucks can fly off, killing or maiming tire mechanics and other bystanders. Again CBS relied on film from the Insurance Institute, this time showing an exploding rim shredding two luckless dummies, an adult and a child. Such footage, said Mike Wallace, "shows graphically what can happen when a wheel rim explodes." Insurance Institute spokesman Ben Kelley (who had also appeared on the Jeep segment) explains that a truck tire is under enormous pressure. "And if that metal, for any reason, dislodges, it fires off like a shell out of a cannon."

Again, *60 Minutes* did not see fit to tell viewers exactly why the metal



An investigative engineer at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration later wrote that the tests' validity was "questionable" given their apparently "abnormal test conditions and unrealistic maneuvers," and also found signs that the vehicles' loading had been "manipulated in combination with other vehicle conditions to generate worst-case conditions" for stability. The "vehicle loading" issue was clarified by the testers' own internal report, which was not disclosed at the time but emerged later in litigation. In their report, the testers say that at the request of Insurance Institute personnel, they had taken the step of *hanging weights in the vehicle's corners*—inside the body, where they were not apparent to the camera.

An isolated lapse? Consider the

happened to dislodge in the film clip. It turned out, the Insurance Institute conceded, that the rims had been "modified" to get them to explode for the demonstration.

Well, actually, the rims' locking mechanism had been deliberately shaved off for the test. Under questioning in a later deposition, an Insurance Institute employee acknowledged that the testers had to go back and shave off more and more of the metal in stages before finally getting off enough of it—an estimated 70 percent—that the rims would explode.

Should *60 Minutes* have to give back its Emmy? Nah. Maybe they can just take the statuette to a machine shop and have 70 per cent of it filed off. Then they can keep the rest.

Ben Kelley's name comes up often in

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these stories. Kelley worked at the Insurance Institute, supervising such functions as publicity and film-making, at the time of both the tire-rim and Jeep episodes. By the mid 1980s he had left the Institute and emerged, like Bloch, as a very busy combination of hired plaintiff's expert and perennial network source. He, too, turned up in the *Dateline* affair, when he boasted of having recommended to NBC that it hire its crash tests out to Bruce Enz—yet another frequent plaintiff's testifier.

How to identify Kelley and his doings on screen is a point of some perplexity at the networks. *20/20*'s Jeep exposé in 1990 tagged him as an "auto safety expert" formerly with the Insurance Institute; it did not mention that he had for years been working as a hired courtroom expert for Jeep rollover plaintiffs. Last year *CBS Evening News* got flayed in a cover story in *TV Guide* ("Fake News") for running a report on allegedly defective seat belts without doing enough to inform viewers that its source was a "video news release" from Kelley's Institute for Injury Reduction (IIR), which frequently sends made-to-order footage on auto safety to broadcast news departments.

CBS's *Street Stories*, in another Kelley-sourced piece, identified the institute blandly as an "auto safety consumer group." In fact, as its letterhead states, it was "founded by trial attorneys," who remain its major constituency. "We are made up of trial attorneys," Kelley readily acknowledges. "This is like saying that the Democratic Party is a front for Democrats."

NO CATALOGUE of this sort would be complete without an account of *60 Minutes*'s 1986 attack on the Audi 5000—perhaps the best-known and best-refuted auto-safety scare of recent years. The Audi, it seemed, was a car possessed by demons. It would back into garages, dart into swimming pools, plow into bank-teller lines, everything but fly on broomsticks, all while its hapless drivers were standing on the brake—or at least so they said.

"Sudden acceleration" had been alleged in many makes of car other than the Audi, and from the start many automotive observers were inclined to view it skeptically. A working set of brakes, they pointed out, can easily overpower any car's accelerator, even one stuck at full throttle. After accidents of this sort, the brakes were always found to be working fine. Such mishaps happened most often when the car was taking off from rest, and they happened disproportionately to short or elderly drivers who were novices to the Audi.

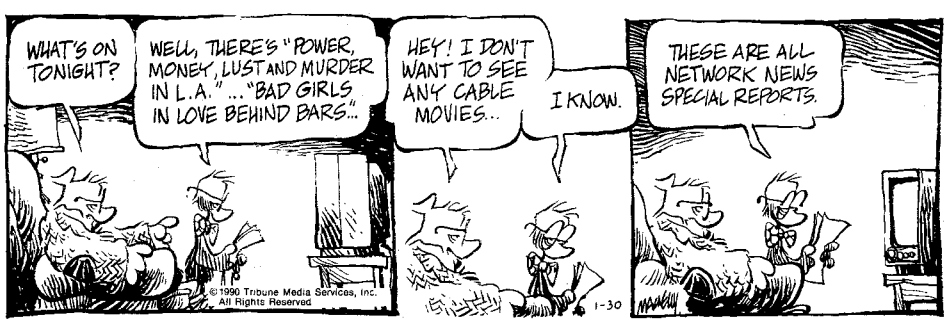
The Audi's pedals were placed farther to the left, and closer together, than those in many American cars. This may well offer a net safety *advantage*, by making it easier to switch to the brake in high-speed emergencies. (The Audi had, and has, one of the best safety records on the road.) But it might also allow inattentive drivers to hit the wrong pedal.

60 Minutes was having none of the theory that drivers were hitting the wrong pedal. It found, and interviewed on camera, some experienced drivers who reported the problem. And it showed a filmed demonstration of how an Audi, as fixed up by, yes, an expert witness testifying against the car-maker, could take off from rest at mounting speed. The expert, William Rosenbluth, was quoted as saying that "unusually high transmission pressure" could build up and cause problems. "Again, watch the pedal go down by itself," said Ed Bradley.

Bradley did not, however, tell viewers why that remarkable thing was happening. As Audi lawyers finally managed to establish, Rosenbluth had drilled a hole in the poor car's transmission and attached a hose leading to a tank of compressed air or fluid.

The tank with its attached hose was apparently sitting right on the front passenger seat of the doctored Audi, but the *60 Minutes* cameras managed not to pick it up. It might have been for the same reason the Jeep weights were tucked away in the wheel wells, rather than being placed visibly on top. Or why the *Dateline* rockets were strapped out of sight underneath the truck rather than conspicuously on its side, and were detonated by remote control rather than by a visible wire. Doing it otherwise would only have gotten viewers confused.

IF YOU want to catch a vehicle doing something thrilling on camera, you face a problem: statistics. Most cars, most of the time, perform as intended. Small Jeeps do roll over more readily than other vehicles, but they seldom do so under ordinary road conditions. The dread Pinto gets rear-ended every day, but Pinto fires killed an average of four and a half people a year in the car's heyday. And when it comes to a vehicle like the GM trucks attacked on *Dateline*—which have a significantly *better* safety record than the average vehicle—the odds are even worse, or, as the case may be, better. According to federal data, it takes 4,000 side-impact crashes in a GM truck to produce one fire with a serious injury or fatality.


WHAT'S ON TONIGHT?
WELL, THERE'S "POWER, MONEY, LUST AND MURDER IN L.A." ... "BAD GIRLS IN LOVE BEHIND BARS"..
HEY! I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANY CABLE MOVIES..
I KNOW.
THESE ARE ALL NETWORK NEWS SPECIAL REPORTS.
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1-30

At a first approximation, then, *any* crash test where something interesting or unusual happens will probably turn out to involve what have been called strange inputs.

In itself, there's nothing wrong with simulating extreme adverse conditions, so long as you make it clear that that's what you're doing. (Automakers themselves frequently "test to failure," as it's called, to find out how far a system can be abused before giving out.) When news broadcasts air such videos, though, they tend not to bother listing the artificial conditions. Disclaimers, as we know, make for dull journalism: it's not very grabby to say, "This could happen to you on a rutted shoulder with sleet on the ground, bald tires, and a fair bit of driver error." Network execs want their safety exposés to match the emotional tone of a murder trial, not a drivers' ed class. And so do trial lawyers.

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Given half a chance, the litigation lobby will yank on the direction of news coverage the way the robots yanked on the steering wheel of the rigged Jeep. All the more noteworthy, then, that one of the best retrospectives on the *Dateline* affair should have come from *The American Lawyer*. Editor-in-chief Steven Brill cites "the media's almost comic double standard when it comes to holding itself accountable as opposed to holding the rest of the world accountable." Many reporters fretted about "morale" at NBC, as if it would be a good thing for morale to stay perky under the circumstances. And, Brill points out, although the network paid dearly for faking the crash, few seemed to care "how utterly unfair the rest of the *Dateline* report was." His magazine called the networks to ask how many corrections they have aired lately. ABC said that it had run a total of three over the past year. CNN couldn't recall any for years back. And a spokesman for the unshamable CBS couldn't remember any corrections at all.

CBS continues to brazen out even its egregious Audi segment. Ed Bradley was a guest on Larry King recently when a caller praised *60 Minutes* in general but politely suggested it might want to apologize for faulty or mistaken stories like those on the Audi and on Alar, the apple spray. "First of all, they're not mistaken. Secondly, they are true," Bradley replied with some heat and more redundancy. He reminded listeners that among the Audi victims the show had spoken to were a policeman and a state auto inspector, supposedly unfoolable about such matters. "It's not a figment of our imagination. It actually happened, whether you believe it or not."

Hewitt, on *Crossfire*, defended the Audi show in a different and, if truth be known, contradictory way. If there was really nothing wrong with the cars, he asked, then why had Audi recalled them after the *60 Minutes* episode? But the point of the main recall was to add an "idiot-proof" device that kept drivers from shifting into gear unless their foot was on the brake. If you accept Ed Bradley's theory that their feet were on the brake all along, that fix should have been useless.

ABC is close behind in the race for the "Edie" (awarded to the network that, with Edith Piaf, regrets the least). One of the themes of its Jeep exposé had been that many rollovers do not arise from driver error. It cited Carl Cook's fatal one-car accident, and showed Mrs. Cook reciting the details of his blamelessness: "There was no speed, there was no drinking, there was no drugs, there was no falling asleep"; he had been "operating a Jeep vehicle in an off-the-road situation, exactly what it was designed to do." Summing it all up, *20/20* reported flatly that the jury in the resulting lawsuit said "that the fault was not Carl Cook's."

Flatly, and wrongly: in fact, the jury had voted Cook's own negligence 50 per cent responsible for the accident. When Chrysler called ABC on this palpable error, network exec Richard Wald wrote back that "we made a judgment that this was not significant" in light of Chrysler's having been found liable for the other half of the fault. Thus do modern networks deflect criticism: lest someone think they made an inadvertent slip, they claim to have misstated things *on purpose*.

Which leaves NBC as what you might call the moral front-runner. Of the three old-line networks, it was the last to plunge into dubious safety journalism in a big way; it got burned in what was, by most accounts, almost its first time out of the box; and it apologized, which is more than its rivals have done. Ousted NBC News head Michael Gartner, for all his sins, has earned the last word. "I saw that I had been too ready to believe our so-called experts, without trying to find out who they were. . . . I realized we were just plain wrong." □

Media, AIDS, And Truth

MICHAEL FUMENTO

THE *Los Angeles Times*'s media critic, David Shaw, began the second of a recent two-part series on public distrust of the media: "By almost any reasonable measure, the mainstream news media in this country are more responsible and more ethical today than at any time in their history." And yet, he declared a paragraph later, "public confidence in the news media is in steady decline."

He just doesn't get it—that the public doesn't share his glowing appraisal of the media's performance. He also didn't get it three years ago when, in an otherwise generally favorable review of my book *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*, he noted scornfully that, "Time and again, [Fumento] suggests the press deliberately misled the public about the likelihood of a heterosexual AIDS epidemic."

For no issue shows so clearly the depths to which the American media have sunk. At the turn of the century, William Randolph Hearst is said to have boasted, "You supply the pictures and I'll supply the war." The modern yellow press has in effect told the government and AIDS activists: You supply the false material, and we'll supply the war on AIDS.

At least since 1986, the government has been misleading the public on the extent of the AIDS epidemic. That was when the federal Centers for Disease Control decided to move all AIDS sufferers of African or Haitian origin into the category of heterosexual AIDS cases. A man from Zaïre who had had sex with a dozen other men, shared needles, and had a blood transfusion would, upon diagnosis, automatically be put into the heterosexual category because of his origin.

The result of shifting all these cases into the heterosexual category was a doubling of that category from 2 to 4

Mr. Fumento is a science and economics reporter at Investor's Business Daily *and the author of* Science under Siege. *His first book,* The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS, *will be republished by Regnery in September.*

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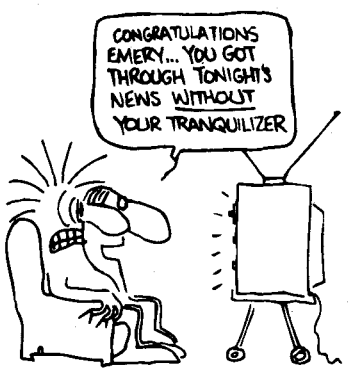
per cent of the total. Rather than cry foul, however, our media watchdogs jumped on this statistical artifact to launch their first wave of AIDS terror. *Newsweek* proclaimed: "The nation's heterosexual, drug-free majority cannot possibly take reassurance from [the fact that homosexuals and drug addicts still account for most cases] for AIDS . . . is not 'their' disease but ours." *U.S. News & World Report* declared: "The disease of *them* is suddenly the disease of *us*." *Time* warned: "The proportion of heterosexual cases . . . is increasing at a worrisome rate . . . The numbers as yet are small, but AIDS is a growing threat to the heterosexual population." The cover story of the *Atlantic* was: "Heterosexuals and AIDS: The Second Stage of the Epidemic." Many of these featured covers with white, middle-class-looking men and women. *USA Today* declared, "Cases Rising Fastest Among Heterosexuals," with the more stately *Washington Post* asserting, "Data Shows AIDS Risk Widening; Increase in Cases Among Heterosexuals Is Causing Concern."

Indeed, there is nothing that the media can't turn into a story on how the AIDS epidemic is exploding into heterosexual ranks at last. In 1988, they jumped on a study of infections on U.S. college campuses as "proof" of the long-awaited heterosexual breakout. Barbara Walters on ABC's *20/20* stated flatly that these were heterosexual infections. Few reporters pointed out that the percentage of infections was half the rate estimated for the U.S. population as a whole, or that of the total of 30 infections found, 28 were in men, even though most of those tested were women. Then, in 1990, Cable News Network informed its viewers, "A new report from CDC indicates that AIDS is on the rise on college campuses." AP ran a similar story. The idea was that the results of this study were an increase from the 1988 study. In fact, this *was* the 1988 study—it just took a medical journal two years to print an article on it, and it was on this that CNN and AP built their stories. Only with AIDS can an old study be declared an alarming increase over itself.

The teenage AIDS epidemic hit the headlines again last year, when the House subcommittee chaired by Pat Schroeder (D., Colo.) released a report declaring that every day the AIDS epidemic "gains ground and threatens the loss of another generation." The media went crazy, with headlines like "AIDS Runs Wild Among Teenagers." *Newsweek* devoted a cover to the subject and *U.S. News & World Report* said "AIDS and HIV infection are rising fastest among teens and college-age kids." Yet, AIDS cases among adolescents had significantly dropped from the year before. Most teen AIDS cases don't come from sex at all but from exposure to tainted blood products. Nobody in the mainstream media pointed this out. A Nexis search revealed only three articles that did, two written by myself for political magazines and one written by a colleague of mine for an actuarial magazine.

And then there is the exploding increase of AIDS among women—at least, according to the front page of the August 16, 1992, *New York Times* there is. Accompanying the article was a large chart showing that AIDS cases in women in the last year had increased 37 per cent, along with seven photos of women afflicted with AIDS or HIV, of whom all were white. In fact, AIDS cases among women had increased only 17 per cent the year before, down from 34 per cent the year before that. Despite the photos, whites account for less than a fourth of American female AIDS cases. Were these innocent mistakes?



Contrast all this with the British media. While some British papers have been just as irresponsible as their American counterparts, other papers have run articles with titles like "Normal Sex is Safe Row," "The Truth about AIDS: Of 2,372 Confirmed Cases Only One Person Caught Disease in a Normal Relationship," and "Don't Believe the Hype." The *Sunday Times*, when it discovered that British publishers were refusing to distribute my book, excerpted it not once but twice. The result is that Britain's government essentially gave up its heterosexual scare campaign, while the U.S. Government's campaign rages on.

> A Gulag Breeds Rage,
> Yes, But Also Serenity
> —*New York Times* headline,
> February 12, 1992

LIKEWISE, the media will portray a single case as an epidemic. Consider Alison Gertz, who claimed to have been infected by a bisexual man. Miss Gertz's face was splashed across TV screens (including a movie starring Molly Ringwald), magazine covers, and the pages of the *New York Times*. Then it was Magic Johnson, a man about whom rumors of homosexuality had spun for years and who, if those rumors were true, had every reason to lie about his sexual activities. CNN jumped on the Johnson story to tell us that now "anyone can get AIDS." Marilyn Chase, the AIDS crusader at the *Wall Street Journal*, used the Johnson incident to illustrate what she called the "growing reality" of heterosexual AIDS transmission. One L.A. TV station ran five straight nights of special broadcasts about the alleged heterosexual AIDS epidemic. Yet even this was not enough, so the media had to destroy Arthur Ashe's privacy to anoint yet another non-homosexual celebrity AIDS victim.

When I called the sports-page assignment editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, Paul Kupper, he confirmed that there had long been rumors of Johnson engaging in homosexual activity but said that he had no plans to investigate whether Johnson was telling the truth. After all, he said, "Heterosexuals do get AIDS. I think that's more important than how he got it." Funny thing—when it was assumed that Johnson got it through heterosexual intercourse, it was frightfully important to the media and the AIDS activists that he got it that way; when it was pointed out that he might not have got it that way, it was not important how he got it.

In the mind of the media, the cause of democratizing AIDS is so just and so great that none of the ethical rules apply. In late 1991, PBS broadcast its self-produced *AIDS: In the Shadow of Love*, in which it depicted HIV as

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being practically more widespread than acne among teenagers. The show, which was broadcast the next day on ABC and subsequently was nominated for an Emmy, told viewers that a single condom can save "hundreds of lives." By amazing coincidence, the show was underwritten by Carter-Wallace, the manufacturer of several lines of prophylactics. The *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and every major wire service heaped praise on the show; only the *Los Angeles Times* mentioned the Carter-Wallace connection and then only in passing.

USA Today would never think of quoting a hockey coach on the Yankees' prospects for taking the pennant or asking the Secretary of Transportation about the war in Bosnia, but it did not hesitate to tell its readers: "Women are 12 times more likely to get AIDS," quoting a Yale *psychologist*. The media have anointed orthopedic surgeons, back doctors, virologists, and, yes, even psychologists as experts on the spread of AIDS because the real experts, epidemiologists, refuse to say the scary things reporters and editors seek. AIDS activists are always treated as experts on the spread of AIDS, as if they had no conflict of interest. When ACT-UP founder Larry Kramer says there's an AIDS death every five minutes, the reporter just writes it up without bothering to punch the figures up on a pocket calculator to see that Kramer is exaggerating by a factor of six.

Similarly, States News Service didn't flinch at reporting that HHS Secretary Donna Shalala told Congress in February, "We could spend our energy on research and immunization and education and still not have any Americans left unless we're prepared to confront the crisis of AIDS." *Not any?* That's a scary statement coming from the nation's top health official. Don't readers deserve to know that there are experts who do not accept her assessment? States News Services didn't think so. They let her statement stand alone.

JUST AS the media fancy themselves the government's watchdog, they also portray themselves as the nation's chief guardian of free speech. But as I was to find, with AIDS that doesn't apply, either. After ACT-UP picketed *Forbes* magazine to get it to disavow a profile it ran of me, the author of the piece, Joe Queenan, said his colleagues in the media had nothing but condemnation for his having dared allow the presentation of an alternative viewpoint on AIDS.

After the release of my book, when stores across the country—including the entire Waldenbooks chain—refused to stock it and my own publishing company's distributors refused to distribute it, I tried desperately to get someone in the media to write about it. But the same folks who blasted B. Dalton for putting *Satanic Verses* behind the counter in response to death threats, the same people who cry foul every time a Christian group tries to get a book pulled off a mandatory school reading list, wanted nothing to do with this story. When I called Kim Painter, who was at the time preparing an article on me for *USA Today*, she replied bluntly, "I don't believe in conspiracy theories." She then proceeded with her article, in which she managed to find nobody with anything good to say about the book, including an epidemiologist who later told me she thought I was right in my assessment. Even the *Wall Street Journal* refused to print an op-ed on the suppression of *Myth*. The editor who rejected it told me, "I imagine you won't agree, but I think your views and the response to them have already received a great deal of attention." No, I didn't agree that no attention to the book's plight constituted "a great deal." Even in the wake of an exposé on the suppression of *Myth* in the February *Washington Monthly*, its untouchable status has not been fully revoked. *New Yorker* reporter Peter Bayer—having heard about the story from a friend who was the subject of a homosexual barrage after he let me review two AIDS books for his newspaper—called me to say how horrified he was that such things could happen in a free country. He said he wanted to do a follow-up. I faxed him the *Washington Monthly* article and never heard from him again.

To a great extent, the media's AIDS campaign has been successful. AIDS continues to receive about twenty times as many federal research and education dollars per death as cancer. Ironically, the same day the *L.A. Times* carried a front-page story about Magic Johnson being used for AIDS fund-raising, it carried several stories describing promising advances in cancer therapy that have been held up for lack of funds. In real terms, cancer spending in 1991 was well below the level it had reached in 1980, and that *includes* the fourth of the cancer budget that actually goes to AIDS research. Just as people are dying of cancer because of the massive fund shift to AIDS, so the media campaign targeting the people who are least at risk of AIDS has de-emphasized the sectors of the population where the epidemic is really occurring. It has also squeezed out messages that might really accomplish some good. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article noted that anti-drug-abuse TV advertisements are being shown less and less because more and more AIDS ads are taking up the air time.

The media's AIDS disinformation campaign will one day be a major area of study for students in journalism school. But today, the question is far from academic. People are dying to hear the truth. □

The Breeding Ground

STEPHANIE GUTMANN

IT'S A MUGGY September day on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and approximately 180 fresh-faced, well-groomed, bright-eyed young people are packed into an auditorium called the World Room for the opening day of a year-long master's program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

The J School really rolls out the red carpet during orientation week, so besides the lectures on sexual harass-

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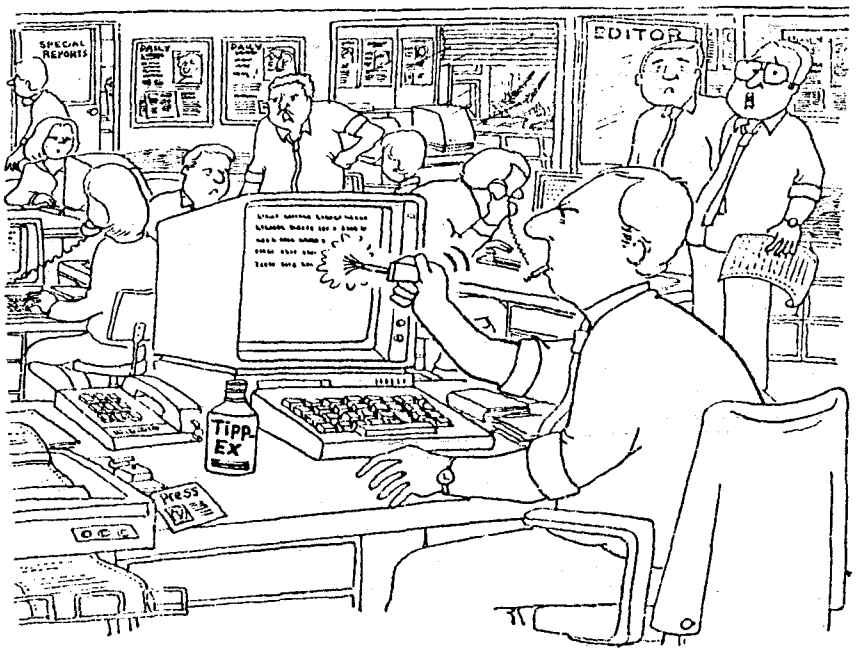
ment and "offensive speech," there are catered cocktail parties in carpeted rooms high above the city where one can glimpse and perhaps slip a résumé to bigshots like "Punch" Sulzberger (a Columbia alum and generous donor). To make the exhortatory speech to the new crop, the school has, over the years, rolled out Fred Friendly, Terry Anderson (AP reporter/Beirut hostage), Salman Rushdie (who came out of hiding momentarily), Cokie Roberts, Bill Moyers, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Anna Quindlen, and Diane Sawyer. And there are always plenty of panel discussions, with well-known journalists taking on subjects like ethics and the "role of the journalist in society."

For the first panel of last fall's orientation week, the school had corralled *Daily News* columnist Bob Herbert to speak about "covering politics." Herbert does not appear to be in a good mood as he looks out at this sea of future journalists. "I hope," he starts testily, "that you will do a better job than my generation has done."

"My generation had a better chance to do good journalism than any other generation in this country's history. . . . I think the best evidence I can give that we do a lousy job covering politics is to look at the politicians [that have been elected]: Ronald Reagan was President of us for eight years—Ronald Reagan!" he roars. "Reporters should have been writing for the entire eight years of his reign that this man was gone, out of it. . . . He should have been covered as a clown. . . . The *Washington Post* just did a long series on Vice President Quayle and he came out looking like a *reasonably competent human being* . . . That's not good . . . the *Washington Post* should not be covering Dan Quayle like that."

This is rather standard fare at a place where there is always the cozy assumption that one is among one's own, a little island of integrity in an evil world, so there are contented chuckles at the mention of Dan Quayle and a comfortable settling into seats. The reassuring invocation of shared assumptions lasts until Herbert comes to his closing lines: "What we really need in the press are reporters who . . . have the courage . . . to tell the truth to the American public . . . I fully expect *you* to make the wrong choice as well." Then there is an uneasy silence.



© Ken Pyne, *Punch*, Rothco

"I'm afraid he still hasn't mastered the new technology."

Having come from colleges like Brown, Yale, Dartmouth, Stanford, and Duke, most of these students are used to paying the tax on white-skin privilege—taking the ritual lambastings—with the proper air of contrition, but there's a difference this time. They are already developing a certain self-consciousness about their reactions. They will have to report events like this clearly and objectively, making sure the factual isn't colored by the emotional. Herbert is young and black, and the uneasy silence could have been the sound of people sorting through emotions and finding that some (like irritation that a guy with such a good job would seem so resentful) are unsuitable indeed.

SEVERAL days later, on the first day of classes, nearly the entire student body is again gathered in the World Room, this time to listen to the Reverend Calvin Butts as a "Background to Race Relations" for Reporting and Writing 1, the basic nuts-and-bolts course required in the first semester. This address is several notches up in volume and fervor from Bob Herbert's. Butts, after all, is Adam Clayton Powell Jr.'s successor at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, and he has the gospel churchman's command of cadence, of hypnotic repetition, of playing the bad cop who shows you the abyss and the good cop who pulls you back from the edge.

In a rambling speech that goes on for nearly an hour he informs the crowd that America is actively involved in trying to get rid of blacks, that "unfortunately too many people are saying, 'Just keep those black people from getting too much power!' " and that "In the newsrooms across this country black people are woefully underrepresented, and the reason is because they might bring a different perspective."

"Why is it that the prison system locks up more black people than they do whites?" he thunders. Then: "The problem is alcoholism, and you push that drug more in black communities. Why?"

"What, then, should be done?" he says, assuming his good-cop identity again.

After the lecture a cluster of students mills for nearly a half an hour trying to get closer to the pastor. Don't worry, Butts is heard reassuring the crowd, "the New York press has been very good to me . . . Columbia News Service [the student-run wire service] has been very good to me. . . . I love young journalists," he assures them.

Many of the fledgling reporters then retire to write up the story. They're going to have to have to tell the truth, without fear or favor. But what *was* the story here? What, as they say in journalism, is the lead?

Apparently, as I find out later when I sit in on a class where the Butts assignment is discussed, the story is not that a prominent New York leader de-

Miss Gutmann is a writer based in New York City.

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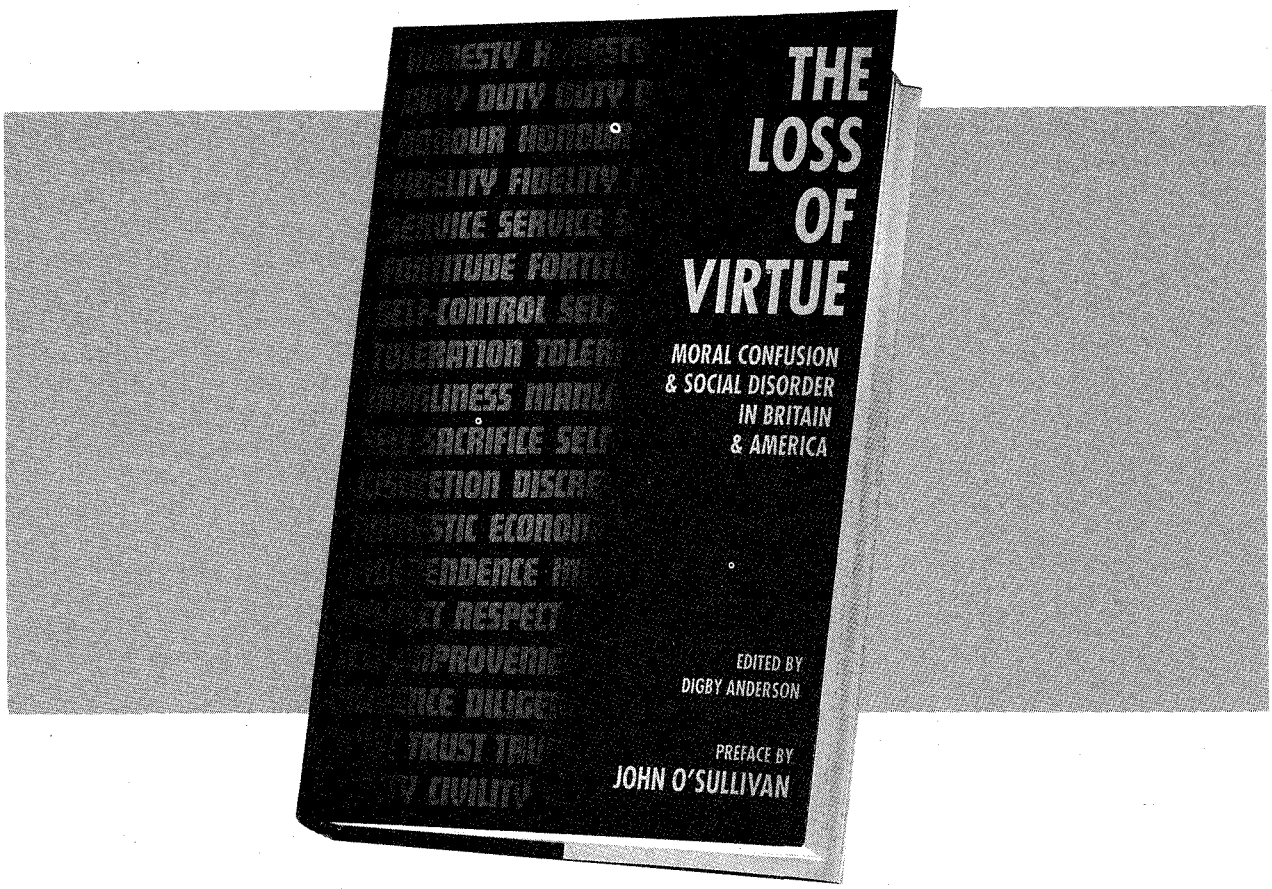
The Loss of Virtue


THE LOSS OF VIRTUE
MORAL CONFUSION & SOCIAL DISORDER IN BRITAIN & AMERICA
EDITED BY DIGBY ANDERSON
PREFACE BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

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livered a racist, inflammatory, even loony harangue—as it might have been if Butts had been a white pastor. "How about Butts's take on Ross Perot?" offers one student. The story that the professor ends up Xeroxing and handing around as particularly successful focuses on whether Reverend Butts is endorsing a candidate in New York's upcoming senatorial election—a subject not even mentioned in his address.

Since this is the state of affairs in the news industry today, it is appropriate, I guess, that students get indoctrinated immediately and that the first assignment becomes an exercise in learning to ignore the evidence of the senses.

The Reverend Butts stories that emerge from the class—using the restricted vocabulary and the restricted range of thought required for the new Newspeak—are solemn, flat, and strangely stilted coming from students supposedly chosen for writing talent. The pieces plod along, via monotonous declarative sentences spliced together in what seems like random order, as if the writer is not sure why he's combining the elements he's combining:

> Reverend Calvin Butts, pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, said he would not publicly support either incumbent Republican Alfonse D'Amato or Democratic challenger State Attorney General Abrams in their race for the Senate seat from New York.
>
> Butts made the announcement following a speech to graduate journalism students at Columbia University.
>
> Butts did not criticize Democratic Presidential candidate Bill Clinton for not speaking out either. In other remarks about the presidential race, however, Butts said he was infuriated with the Democratic Party for taking Blacks for granted.
>
> Butts supports independent candidate Ron Daniels for President. Daniels was an organizer for the Rainbow Coalition. Butts was a former supporter of Ross Perot.

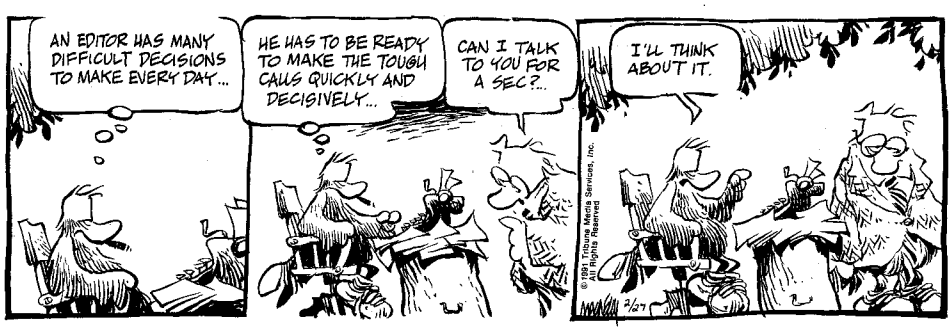
'WELCOME to a life of learning," the students have been told by the dean. "Journalists live their lives on the front line in the battle for truth in society. . . . There will be no time for fixed religions, no isms. We do have ideals if not ideology: love of truth and a commitment to public service." Still, they are already learning, subtly and subliminally, that some truths are not fit for print.

Not to mince words here, Columbia's School of Journalism seems to be as monolithically liberal today as it was in 1962, when Pat Buchanan found it a "citadel of liberalism" (as he would later write in his autobiographical *Right from the Beginning*). We're not just seeing Nineties radical chic: rampaging liberalism has been a Columbia J School tradition since the school's founding in 1912.

How can one know this, given that the ideological orientation of the country's most respected journalism school is a subject only two people (Buchanan, and Eleanore Goodman in 1983 for *The American Spectator*) have written about directly? Actually, it's easy to trace because with CJS's location—inside one of the nation's greatest story laboratories and a subway ride away from nearly all the national press—the school has left a paper trail. "This little town," CJS boasts in its recruitment brochures, is "crawling with our graduates." The Pulitzer Prizes and National Magazine Awards are judged and awarded here; an influential trade paper, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, is edited on the school's top floor. The national press—perhaps afflicted with "East of the Hudson River" myopia—covers the school's changes of dean and does periodic "Is It Slipping?" stories. Stanley Rothman and Robert and Linda Lichter chose CJS when they wanted to poll the attitudes of the next generation of journalists for their book *The Media Elite*. A number of *New York Times* bylines are graduates—Ralph Blumental, E. R. Shipp, Flora Lewis, Josh Barbanel, Nadine Brozan, William Celis III, William Glaberson, Clifford Krauss, Martin Gottlieb, Joseph Berger, Anna Kisselgoff.

Another reason for the paper trail: Since very early in the school's history every student has been required to write a "master's project," a long piece of reportage, which is then bound, indexed, and kept in the library theoretically forever. The titles of the master's projects—"Quiet Man: Mental Illness within Shelter Walls," for instance, or "The Creation of a Magnet School: Integration or Subtle Racism?" or "Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Women's Self-Help," or "Who Will Put On Plays about Me Now? The Future of Professional Black Theater Companies"—are an excellent record of values and prejudices.

Even if turning out politically correct reporters is not an overt goal (and Columbia makes sporadic efforts to be less predictable and has occasional successes), it is often a result anyway. Journalism isn't rocket science. There isn't much to learn that you couldn't learn better at a small paper—getting paid for your time. The schools really exist only as a way of paring down the pack created in the early Seventies when, as an orientation-week speaker put it, "Every young person in America saw the movie *All the President's Men* and said: 'We can bring down the President of the United States!' " They were off and running, flooding into the journalism schools, causing what *Time* magazine referred to in 1974 as a "journalism-school explosion," in which J-school enrollments quadrupled compared to the decade before. The dirty little secret is that almost all the students are there mainly to boost their career—by finding a powerful mentor, by making contacts, and by just kind of hanging out in New York hoping to get noticed. The students at CJS tend, then, to be more careerist, or at least in a more careerist mode. Students like Buchanan who jousted and brawled exuberantly are rare. The number of people who want to work in journalism has quadrupled since he went to school in the early Sixties, BW (Before Watergate), and it simply does not make sense to make things difficult for one-


AN EDITOR HAS MANY DIFFICULT DECISIONS TO MAKE EVERY DAY...
HE HAS TO BE READY TO MAKE THE TOUGH CALLS QUICKLY AND DECISIVELY...
CAN I TALK TO YOU FOR A SEC?..
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
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self before one even has a foot in the door.

AS ONE of the Class of '90, I spent my time in Investigative/Business Reporting asking major media companies about the ethnic makeup of their boards of directors and reviewing how much board members award themselves in salaries and bonuses. The idea was to collect enough data for a big *Columbia Journalism Review* piece on "lack of diversity in media companies' management."

Fortunately we found enough lack of diversity to get that just-like-Woodward-and-Bernstein glow. "Who they choose to put on their boards tells you something about their values," the professor commented. "When you think that a media company is supposed to reflect ourselves back to ourselves these results are certainly dismaying."

In a similar business-writing class a week of class time was devoted to the subject of shareholder activism. "It's a weird thing to spend a lot of time on because this was not a group of people who already knew a lot about business," says Nina Munk, Class of '92. "But what [the focus on shareholder activism] immediately implies is, 'This is what's needed to balance the inherent abuses in the corporate system.'"

There wasn't much encouragement to do stories on plucky little start-ups in Queens and their problems with New York City's maze of regulations, taxes, and fees. The business story tended to include the standard early-Left elements: victims, oppressors, and the failure of unfeeling government to mount a rescue.

"I couldn't believe the antagonism toward business among the students in my class. I was really taken aback," recalls Miss Munk, who now works at *Forbes*. "This was not a well-thought-through anti-business stance; this was Profit Is Bad simplicity."

In another Investigative/Business Reporting exercise we took on "the New Right." The teacher of the course had herself spent six months chasing Richard Mellon Scaife around (literally—down the sidewalk sometimes) because she believed there was a big story in the fact that *rich people* (up to no good to begin with) were *spending money* (something fishy right there) to INFLUENCE THE PUBLIC AND SPREAD THEIR RIGHT-WING IDEAS!!! Her news judgment turned out to be sound when her investigative piece, "Citizen Scaife," ended up on the cover of the *Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine.

Another assignment: to search the tax records and funding sources of New Right publications and think tanks. The professor seemed rather disappointed when I told her that *The New Criterion*, which I had been assigned to audit, was not a GM-size glass-and-steel conglomerate with a basement sweatshop full of Haitian refugees slaving over hot printing presses—it is just a small publication with a circulation of 7,000, and it seemed from its balance sheets to be barely keeping its head above water. Telling me with a sigh that "there doesn't seem to be much there," she took me off the assignment.

In the interest of fairness I have to say that this professor—though an itchy-fingered income redistributor—was also one of the most beloved professors of recent years (even among the more conservative students) because of her warmth, her honesty, and the energy of her teaching. Nina Munk remembers that "in spite of her clear bias she made an obvious effort to try to present other sides; for example, she brought in a spokesman for a company that had been overwhelmed by asbestos litigation."

In fact, most faculty are not consciously ideological—which is actually worse than if they consciously were (because then they could control for it). They just seem to live in a simple, happy world where all *reasonable* people agree on these things. They believe that the people who don't hold the right views are far away in places like Georgia and Texas, wear polyester, and look like Rush Limbaugh. But what does it mean if at the country's most influential journalism school there is, as Paul Lipkowitz, Class of '93, put it, "no diversity of opinion"? ("It's pretty staggering," he went on to say, "and I think of myself as a liberal, but it would be so much more interesting if there was more of a debate and less of a diatribe.")

"I can't imagine why a conservative would want to be a journalist," the associate dean recently told his Critical Issues in Journalism class. "Journalists are by definition liberal." (He explained to me later that he was talking about classic liberalism.)

IT SEEMS important to define here what kind of leftism Columbia's is. It is not, largely, the totalitarian new strain that's panting to invoke speech codes and expel students for insensitivity. Journalism professors have the First Amendment to worry about. The older permanent faculty at Columbia (this is not true of the Brave New World of young adjunct professors drawn from the ranks of working reporters for the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, CBS, et al.) is mostly afflicted with what Rick Marin, Class of '86, called an "old-fashioned crusading liberalism." CJS professor Melvin Mencher, the author of a extremely successful journalism textbook, was known for bellowing to his classes: "Afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted!" It could have been the school slogan.

Columbia has some admirable biases (in favor of print, in favor of an almost anthropological level of "legwork") and some silly ones (that the gritty story about victims is inherently "realer," more important). To make a viable story assignment you could combine any three from this list: Bronx, babies, community activist, crack, homelessness, social program that's losing its funding, single mother, the Lower East Side, and AIDS—always AIDS.

'I can't imagine why a conservative would want to be a journalist,' said the associate dean. 'Journalists are by definition liberal.'

Some of this has to do with the limitations of being a journalism student rather than a real reporter connected to a real publication. If you can't offer sources the incentive of publicity, you have to count on their good will. People who talk to you are essentially doing you a favor, so journalism students tend to find themselves stuck with cranks, political extremists, Bowery juiceheads, and anybody else with a lot of time on his hands.

Another reason for the focus on vic-

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tims is an unspoken cultural imperative: that journalism should be helpful even at the expense of being truthful. The social pendulum between helpful and truthful has swung back and forth, but in the Nineties it is stuck way over on the helpful side. At the J School they seem unaware that helpful versus truthful is even a dilemma—so completely have they succumbed to the journalist-as-social-worker way of thinking.

The first rule of helpful journalism is: Strip language of any word or phrase that might hurt someone's feelings. If liberalism—as described by Camille Paglia—is "institutionalized American niceness, which seeks, above all, not to offend and must therefore pretend not to notice any differences or distinctions between people or cultures" then adjectives are big trouble; verbs, which also convey nuance (difference), are treacherous too. Having assumed responsibility for saving the world, journalists now seem worried by the power they think they have. Hence there has been a lot of time spent figuring out how to rid the language of words that express ambivalence. (Ambivalence seems to be an unacceptable emotion these days.) To help their colleagues with this struggle, fellows in the Multicultural Management Program at the University of Missouri's School of Journalism compiled a "Dictionary of Cautionary Words and Phrases," a compilation of words to be expunged. "Burly" is on this Newspeak hit list because it is "an adjective too often associated with large black men, implying ignorance. . . ." So is "Dutch treat," "which implies that Dutch people are cheap," and "golden years," which "characterizes people's later years as uniformly idyllic." Is the public really so fragile? These journalists seem to think so. "In this country, the language is a party to the class and race distinctions that doom so many to second-class existences," a University of Missouri professor fumed in a letter to the editor defending the dictionary. "We are what we say we are. Others are what we say they are. And not one of us is immune." Criticism of the dictionary (even Walter Goodman of the *New York Times* had been snide) is "insensitive at best, racist at worst," the professor wrote.

GOOD EVENING. IN THE NEWS TONIGHT—ARE WE EATING CANCEROUS KILLER APPLES?! THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THREE MILE ISLAND: IS IT REALLY SAFE TO BREATHE? AND, LATER IN THIS NEWSCAST - A STARTLING REPORT ON THE ODDS THAT THE NEXT AIRPLANE YOU'RE ON WILL FALL APART IN MID-AIR!
ON THE AIR
HOWARD
GOD, I LOVE JOURNALISM!...
ABC NEWS
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The second rule of helpful journalism is: Relentlessly balance all stories, even if you have to make ludicrous moral equivalences and gloss over facts. This commandment has spun off a whole new genre, a specialty of the *New York Times*, which one could call value-neutral reporting. Telling the story of a thirty-year-old woman knifed to death in front of her Upper West Side building by a deranged ex-con, the *Times* headlined the article: "The Dancer and the Vagrant: Two Lives, One Death," then wrote: "The intersection of two lives, the victim, a former Rockette who loved New York City, and the suspect, an ex-convict who was an enigma to those few who knew him, was brief, the police said—only the time it took for him to stab her to death."

The *Times*'s account of another case—in which a young man in New Haven was held up and then shot in the head apparently as an afterthought by a robber who said, "I ought to shoot this cracker"—was headlined: "Son of Privilege, Son of Pain: A Random Death at Yale's Gates," following with: "The paths that brought the victim and the accused into collision began in opposite poles of American life." (There is no evil, just equally passive elements "in collision"—pushed here and there by forces stronger than themselves.)

The helpful journalist treads a narrow road. Peril is on either side, and the strain takes its toll. "We were young; we were gifted; we had our whole lives in front of us," Buchanan reflected, "but one would have thought many of us had just been condemned to a life of mortification and prayer with the Carthusians. Some students and teachers seemed to carry the weight of the world; a look of barely suppressed pain was forever in their faces."

When I went to the school nearly thirty years later, Buchanan's description was still amazingly on target. Journalism was a calling. There was an implied route to purification, a prescribed way to rise above the prejudiced, self-centered concerns of mere mortals. A student named Samme Chittum was held up as an example because she spent several weeks during the school year living with a drug-addicted streetwalker. The resulting master's project won her a school award and, faculty seemed to imply, her eventual job at one of the city's major dailies. We got the message. Apparently there were no stories among the working poor and middle classes in Queens or Staten Island. (And if there were, the stories were the most mindless, patronizing sort featuring Joe Sixpack watching the World Series on TV in a homey beer joint.)

In my year the competition to outsuffer everybody else seemed to have reached a peak when a 22-year-old blonde from Connecticut announced that for her master's project she would

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spend the entire month of her winter break in the subways living with the homeless. (Communing with the homeless is this generation's version of the Peace Corps.) She vowed to have the Complete Experience. "I'll look for food in garbage cans," she told us with a beatific smile, "and I've got a fold-up lawn chaise to sleep on." When we asked her the obvious question, where she would pee, she let us know serenely that she was ready to squat on cold subway platforms or search out secluded corners in rat-infested tunnels.

She did do a piece on her time with the subway dwellers (even though she was often spotted above ground). It turned out to be well written, entertaining, and more three-dimensional than most of the writing people did in the school, but it had a crucial failing: this gently reared, pink-and-gold blonde had spent her days (and at least a few nights) wandering with a close-knit group of drug-addicted and alcoholic men, but there was no discussion of sexual tension, no discussion of the resentment this kind of temporary homelessness might have aroused, no discussion of past lives and the progress into addiction. In the perfect example of Helpful Journalism, she had humanized homeless people—but only in a sweet, Hallmark-cards sort of way. Troubled, undoubtedly complex adult men became sexless and harmless—sort of like the merry red-nosed hobos one used to see on black velvet paintings.

It's not surprising that she left the adult sexuality out. It is, as we have been seeing lately with all the sexual-harassment and date-rape cases, a veritable gold mine of differences, and will lead almost certainly to thought- or word-crime. A friend of mine in the Class of '90, for instance, was rapped on the knuckles for what his teacher called a stubborn "streak of sexism"—he had used descriptive adjectives ("attractive" and so forth) when writing about women. He had written descriptively about men, too, but nobody seemed to notice that.

But in one sense teachers at the J School were only doing their jobs: After some inter-faculty jousting several years ago, the CJS administration settled on a goal for curriculum. Instead of teaching journalism theory (yes, some schools actually do this) or teaching journalism in an ideal form, the dean settled on a trade-school model in which the school would simulate real-world conditions, with daily deadlines, a crushing work load, too little time to get background on the subjects covered, frequent changes of beat, and cynical, lowest-common-denominator assumptions about audience. The idea is not to encourage a lot of fancy ambitions about ideas or insights, but to prepare students to compete in the real world.

Anyway, what this means in practical terms is that the student spends much of his $13,500 year attempting to replicate mediocrity. Prose with too much "voice," or prose that goes outside the accepted idea frames—the homeless are like everybody else, everyone is equally at risk for AIDS, etc.—doesn't *sound* like the real thing; it is, therefore, not a passing product. A frequent model is the mongrel New York daily *Newsday*, which CJS professors like because it attempts to be both "of the people" *and* unrelentingly politically correct—a tabloid a liberal can like.

BUT HOW have we come to such a pass: in which the real-world journalism one attempts to imitate is so desiccated, trite, formula-ridden? And what relationship does the professionalization of journalism (via graduate—even PhD—programs in elite schools) have with the juiceless writing?

The decline of American journalism happened largely because of a complete change of personnel and the ongoing repudiation of the old guard. The old guard was not known particularly for their intellectualism or brilliant writing but they did tend to write like human beings for other human beings who they assumed were like themselves. It is completely clear that in the nation's newsrooms there has been a quiet purge of the gruff, brawling, profane, irredeemably sexist old bastards who wrote human-textured (if "insensitive") prose and the gradual installation of a new breed who are prim, sleek, androgynous, politically correct, and—as the newspapers are discovering too late, as they frantically try to shore up dropping circulations—rather humorless.

For *New York Times* columnist Russell Baker, the disappearance of "the great hack tradition" came home to him when he searched in vain through accounts of an execution for a description of the "condemned man's last meal."

"When I was one among millions of young and avid newspaper readers," he fulminated, "the papers always reported the final meals consumed by people about to walk the last mile." Where now were the writers who would tell you what you *wanted* to know instead of what they think you *should* know?

At about the same time, the Pen and Pencil club in Philadelphia shut down—one of a mob of journalists' drinking clubs that have closed in the last decade. "If we served carrot juice and had Nautilus machines upstairs we'd have a far greater membership," a forlorn patron said.

Columnist Jimmy Breslin was sent to the woodshed after he roared at a female reporter who had accused him of "spewing sexism." His initial offense? He had written a column in which he groused about his politician-wife's frequent absences from home. When asked if she forgave Breslin, the budding young totalitarian (a colleague at *Newsday*) replied: "If forgiving means I have to believe that he doesn't harbor any racism or sexism, then no. If forgiving means that I understand that people make mistakes, then, yes, I have forgiven him. Even the best of people make mistakes and even people who make mistakes again and again and again are redeemable." (The new, redeemed Breslin made an appearance recently in a strangely remote, affectless column in which he described how he was dragged from a taxicab, robbed, stripped to his underwear, and beaten by a mob during the Crown Heights riots. No more "insensitivity" for him: the column, with its lobotomized, detached sound, might

The old guard was not known for their intellectualism, but they did tend to write like human beings for other human beings who they assumed were like themselves.

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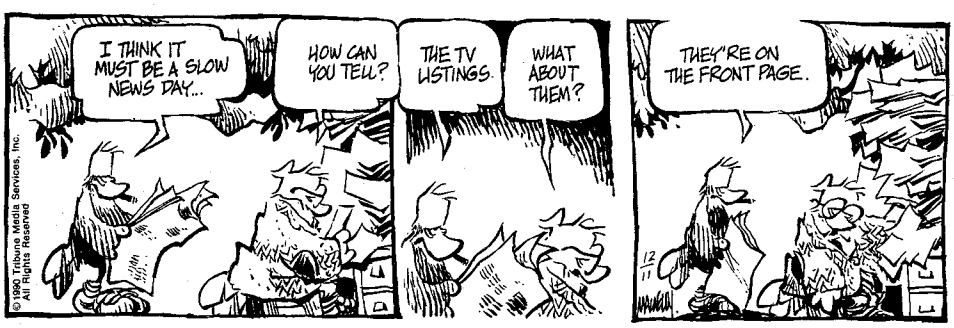
have been written by Winston Smith after his electroshock sessions in Room 101.)

In 1990 commentator Andy Rooney was suspended from his job and subjected to many column inches of denunciation after he said on the air: "Too much alcohol, too much food, drugs, homosexual unions, cigarettes. They're all known to lead quite often to premature death." In 1990 *Boston Herald* sports writer Lisa Olson did her part toward sanitizing one of the new frontiers *outside* the newsroom (presumably she had already whipped the newsroom into shape) by accusing members of the New England Patriots football team of sexual harassment. King of the Yuppies, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr.—a forty-year-old sprite (nicknamed "Pinch") who wears wire-rimmed granny glasses and says, "We have to find a way not to judge talent by the traditional white male standard"—became the new publisher of the *New York Times*. And the circulation of newspapers everywhere continued to decline.


I THINK IT MUST BE A SLOW NEWS DAY...
HOW CAN YOU TELL?
THE TV LISTINGS
WHAT ABOUT THEM?
THEY'RE ON THE FRONT PAGE.
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VARIOUS newsmen have found different ways to describe this aspect of the cultural war. Mike Pearl, starting his fortieth year of crime reporting at the *New York Post*, told me about "the SYJ—Serious Young Journalists." "They're all over the place," he said, "and watch out what kind of jokes you tell them."

"There used to be a certain irreverence," he went on. "Now they all want to straighten out the world—they're not really reporters, they're policemen."

Mike Royko, the contentious syndicated columnist based at the *Chicago Tribune*, agreed: "There wasn't this constant pursuing of wrong-doing—there wasn't this hunt for the Pulitzer. You didn't hang a guy out to dry just 'cause he took his brother-in-law and put him on a payroll somewhere . . . you weren't playing the role of the prosecutor. For a good many years now, I don't know if it started with Watergate or when, you have far more trophy hunters in journalism now. . . . They want to nail somebody because it's going to win a prize."

What Watergate brought—besides new images of glamorous reporters (until then reporters had been portrayed as low-lifes, comic figures)—was the sense that journalism could be a tool for social change. So, instead of a boy's club, a cozy, boozy, smoky, loud-mouth refuge from respectability, the field became a magnet for people who, in another decade, might have been school teachers, social workers, political activists, or priests. (The turn-of-the-century Muckrakers didn't count as recruitment poster boys because they weren't sexy like Robert Redford.)

One of the main differences between the old guard and the new is education. Maurice Carroll, a fiftyish reporter at *Newsday* and a J-School graduate, told me he had taken over from a man who had only a college education, who, in turn, had taken the place of man who had only a high-school education. Journalists now, in the main, have far more formal education than "the average American" and are vastly overeducated for the work they have to do—which mainly involves telling stories as simply and entertainingly as possible. This is one of the factors explaining the didactic urge. It is, at least, a way to make the job seem more important.

And because reporters today see newspapering as an important career, there is much more careerism, and thus less time spent dallying in the swamp of the life-cycle: having other types of jobs, having families, assuming mortgages, being drafted. "In the Fifties, when I started," says Royko, "most of the men were World War II veterans—guys who'd been prisoners of war—and many of the younger guys, guys my age, were veterans of the Korean War, so there was a different kind of sophistication.

"[These new kids] may have spent their summers at the *Miami Herald* or the *Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*, but the old guys had maybe spent their summers in a foxhole killing people, so they were a little more mature; they were guys who had families—they'd been through stuff. They knew what the pressure was like"—so they weren't as ready to damn others ("corrupt politicians, contractors, businessmen") for succumbing to it.

"The guys I learned from really did reflect the community," Royko says. "For one thing, 60 to 80 per cent of them were from the Chicago area. They came from the city, their fathers were cops, their fathers were working men, they knew people."

And that's another difference. Like paratroopers dropped into hostile territory, journalists tend now to come from somewhere other than where they are stationed. Of course, by now it often *is* hostile territory. Citizens of Wilkes-Barre or Dubuque know there's a cultural war going on and are furious at ceding what was once the voice of the community to people they see as uncommitted and transient. One of my J-School pals now working at a small paper in Pennsylvania says most of the young reporters "are from somewhere else" and finds that the local people complain constantly about "elitism" in the paper's coverage.

Since they are less integrated with the community, today's editors and reporters have real problems talking to their readers: "[Editors of yore] didn't need pollsters to tell them what they thought," grouses Royko. "You never had meetings—it was, 'We've got a good story—let's go with it.' Today they've got to have meetings—they have the morning meeting, they have the late morning meeting . . . they have to decide what's going in the paper and why, whether it's important or significant."

Mike Pearl complained of the same thing: "Newspapers used to be staffed with men who rode the subways, and trusted their own judgment. Now newspapers have focus groups to see what they should write about."

The Gulf War was a case in point. Polls showed that most Americans were thrilled by the successful air war and exhilarated by the sight of the

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competent, cheerful USAF and RAF pilots. None of this was reflected in the reporting of the war. Newspapers were already brooding about the next potential catastrophe. Considering the schism, perhaps editors are right to mistrust their own judgment; the reader is a sort of alien who has to be studied, interpreted.

Another source of trouble is the cult of objectivity. There's just one problem with this: objectivity is impossible. (Unlike fairness, in which a writer takes account of his own biases and attempts to control for them.)

Writing is like furnishing a room; it's a series of choices, and someone makes those choices. Reporting, Carl Bernstein has said, "is not stenography." There is no way you can reproduce the torrent of experience. All the writer can do is *select* the anecdotes, facts, images, and opinions he thinks best convey the truth—but, increasingly, readers' instincts tell them it "just ain't so." The fellow in Pennsylvania who told an opinion researcher during the last presidential campaign, "[The press] must think we're sooooo stupid," spoke for many.

Even television news, with its highly selective content, is in some ways a less mediated medium. You can determine what shots you show and in what order, but you can't change the cadence of Anita Hill's speech or the set of Clarence Thomas's jaw—and this was the kind of crucial information viewers used to make up their minds about the truth.

I SUPPOSE just telling people what happened in your own inherently flawed, biased way is too humble a goal for the post-Watergate generation. Far more stirring is Joseph Pulitzer's dictum, "The power to mold the future of the republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations," which is inscribed in bronze in the CJS lobby.

The connection between J schools and the new self-righteousness is important. All my "old guard" informants said some variation of "I think they learn it at the J schools." "They all come out thinking about their Responsibility," Mike Pearl said, "instead of thinking about how much fun this can be."

Like schools of social work and schools of education, schools of journalism transplant rarefied, elitist, city-folk concerns like multicultural education and condoms-for-six-year-olds to the heartland. The daily newspaper, once a simple voice—a neighbor talking to neighbors—becomes a hectoring superego, the voice of the cultural elite. □

The Media & Anita Hill

DAVID BROCK

VIEWER RATINGS of the Clarence Thomas–Anita Hill hearings in October 1991 made television history, and the confrontation was surely one of the most media-saturated scandals ever played out in Washington. Once Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment were leaked to the media, it was, as Senator Alan Simpson put it at the time, "full feeding frenzy."

When the hearings opened on Friday, October 12, reporters were seen lingering outside EEOC headquarters in downtown Washington, offering cash bribes to agency employees for old personnel directories, in an apparent attempt to find other female employees of Judge Thomas who could attest to a pattern of such behavior on his part, or who might know something more about Miss Hill's unsubstantiated charges.

Even after the hearings ended and the judge became a Supreme Court Justice, people from at least five major news organizations—including the intrepid Nina Totenberg from National Public Radio—continued this effort. One might have thought that Justice Thomas's bill of health was clean, after four prior Senate confirmations, five FBI checks, and dozens of reporters sifting through his private papers and even stealing into his garage to pore over old books. But the media remained unsated.

Covering judges as politicians, of course, is the unfortunate legacy of the campaign waged by the opponents of Robert Bork in 1987, and it will be said that these reporters were simply doing their jobs. Perhaps so. Journalists are, after all, supposed to be professional skeptics.

The journalistic problem here was more of omission than of commission. When the press continued to dog Justice Thomas for months and found nothing—no "other women," no support for Anita Hill's version of events from third parties, no evidence of his alleged interest in pornography, not one discrepancy in his sworn testimony—their collective news sense should have suggested that there might be problems with Professor Hill's account.

YET THIS is the precise point at which they all closed their notebooks and went on to the next story. Thus the answer to one of the questions I am most frequently asked these days: How was I able to publish a book, two years after the heavily covered events of 1991, that contains so much previously undisclosed information? The answer is that I picked up the story where the journalistic pack left off.

Before turning to Miss Hill herself, let's consider the coverage, or rather the startling absence of coverage, of what should have been a major news story last spring. In May 1992, Peter Fleming, the Senate special counsel who investigated the leak of Miss Hill's charges to the press, reported the results of his five-month probe. While inconclusive on the matter of who actually leaked, the report—according to the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, the only media outlet that thoroughly reported Mr. Fleming's findings—showed how "Senate staffers worked closely with interest groups

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not merely in an attempt to defeat Thomas but specifically in an effort to bring Hill's charges before the public."

Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran brief stories on inside pages, dismissing the import of the investigation. Yet it was big news. While it did not address the matter of Miss Hill's truthfulness, the Fleming report nonetheless brought into view for the first time the weeks of scheming and manipulation on the part of liberal Senate staffers and interest-group leaders to force Miss Hill to testify. It therefore radically altered the

THE REAL ANITA HILL
D. BROCK
SO I CONNED CONGRESS! SO I'M REALLY A LIBERAL FEMINIST! YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT, PIG?!
WHAP!
SLAM!
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UNITED FEATURE SYND.

view of Anita Hill as a courageous woman who had wrestled with her conscience and finally decided to come forward with the "truth" about Clarence Thomas.

Imagine, for a moment, if the shoe had been on the other foot: In an effort to torpedo a Clinton nominee, aides to Senator Simpson conspired with Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation to coax a piece of uncorroborated dirt out of a completely reluctant witness, broke Senate rules and violated the Privacy Act by leaking the confidential allegation to the *Washington Times*, and finally lied about all this to a congressional investigator. Would this not be another Iran–Contra?

The identity of the leakers—uncovered for the first time in my book, *The Real Anita Hill*, as Senator Paul Simon of Illinois and James Brudney, an aide to Senator Howard Metzenbaum who quickly left the Senate staff after the Fleming report was released—also attracted little media interest, though this lapse is more understandable. Reporters thrive on leaks, and have no appetite for exposing those who butter their bread.

The most curious media boycott, however, concerns the accuser herself. The confirmation process had been so thoroughly politicized that the most obvious motive for anyone to try to stop the Thomas nomination was political conviction. Yet the question of Miss Hill's politics was ruled out of order by Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Biden.

It was also, apparently, ruled out of order in the nation's newsrooms. The *Washington Post* published a front-page profile of Anita Hill that did not once broach the issue of her political views. The *Times*, meanwhile, reported: "Some of her closest friends here at the University of Oklahoma have trouble remembering any of her political beliefs beyond a deep commitment to the welfare of minority students on campus . . . she seems to have little interest in politics . . . several of her friends were stumped when asked about her private interests and beliefs." (This reportorial lack of interest emanated from the same newspaper that had published an exposé of the private life of Patricia Bowman, the Florida woman who had accused William Kennedy Smith of rape. So much for a single standard.)

Other reporters seemed actively to cover up Miss Hill's ideological predispositions. On the air, Miss Totenberg identified Miss Hill as a Reaganite—though in a subsequent lecture at Stanford University, she stated that if the nation was ever to see someone with views remotely similar to Miss Hill's on the Supreme Court (God help us), we would first have to elect a Democratic President to appoint her. Timothy Phelps, the *Newsday* reporter who along with Miss Totenberg first broke the story of Miss Hill's allegations, promoted the view that she was an open admirer of the judicial philosophy of Judge Bork.

As I demonstrate amply in my book, Miss Hill is a liberal activist and committed feminist on the Oklahoma campus. This information was easily available to anyone who cared to look. Clippings from the student newspaper, for instance, showed that she was the primary sponsor of a resolution to ban so-called "hate speech" on the campus, one of the more ambitious projects of the politically correct cadres. Why, Miss Hill herself, in interviews last year, revealed that she was a Democrat, that she often took positions antagonistic to those of the Reagan Administration while she was serving in it, and that she did not support Judge Bork on the issues. Somehow, these comments never made it into the dominant press.

WHY, then, did the media miss the story? While the reporters who did *not* do the story are perhaps best qualified to respond to this question, I can offer some informed speculation. Many in the media regarded Anita Hill as the victim in this case from the moment she burst into the headlines, before knowing anything about her or her allegations. (Should anyone doubt this, consult the front-page editorials at the time by Maureen Dowd in the *New York Times*, promoting the canard that the committee of white men simply didn't take Miss Hill's charge seriously.) This being so, any attempt to assess her credibility or to check into her background was seen as simply victimizing the victim all over again.

Second, and probably more important, is that Miss Hill's allegations came to represent something much larger than whether or not Clarence Thomas sexually harassed her. Her testimony clearly encouraged many other women to come forward with sexual-harassment claims, motivated many (liberal Democratic) women to run for elective office last year, and may even have jump-started the flagging feminist movement. Thus any attempt to get to the bottom of this spe-

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cific case was seen as a distraction from the more important political objectives—objectives which, it must be said, are shared by the media elite.

Was it a media conspiracy? No, more like a feminist consensus, which may be even more powerful and corrupting of the truth. □

Good Intentions

LORRIN ANDERSON

"IN THE greedy excesses of the Reagan years . . ."

It's Bryant Gumbel, on the *Today* Show. Bryant *Gumbel?* The media multimillionaire, who negotiated rising seven-figure salaries in the "Reagan" Eighties?

But let it pass. Just watch, as the national self-confidence and prosperity of the "Reagan years," when inflation was tamed and large numbers of proles were excused from the tax rolls entirely, vanish into the smoke of media revisionism. Down the old memory hole, as the press and television and show biz recreate a decade when the middle class sank into poverty and two Republican Presidents piled up crippling debt. Entitlements? Democratic Congresses? Well, yes. But let's not dwell on the subtleties, or the enduring public skepticism about more government and higher taxes: Look on the works of Reaganism, ye mighty, and despair at that colossal wreck . . .

"Their crusade was rejected, their ideology repudiated much as the Russians have repudiated Communism."—Lindsey Gruson, summing things up in the news columns of the *New York Times*.

But though Reaganism is dead, its malign effects will linger on, unless the New Democrat in the White House wins his "deficit reduction" program. Repeat after Bill Clinton:

TAXES ARE CONTRIBUTIONS
SPENDING IS INVESTMENT
DEPENDENCY IS FREEDOM

BUT OF COURSE it's complicated. Perhaps it's true, as Irving Kristol has suggested, that news people—the less faithful, anyway—have come to see through the "passionate intellectual simplicity" from which liberal reformism has always drawn its strength. And media animus against conservatives and Republicans does seem to have retreated from center stage since November 3—the home team won, after all; the menacing legions of the Christian Right were turned back.

At first one detected a certain more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger flavor to the growing press reservations about Clinton, but as lie follows lie, gaffe succeeds gaffe, and broken promises litter the landscape, the press, like a disappointed lover, has turned waspish, put off by the ineptitude if not the agenda. Waco. Haircut. Travel office. Lani Guinier, for heaven's sake. It's hardly the feeding frenzy you can imagine if Reagan or Bush had provided so many targets of opportunity so quickly, but it's getting a little severe. Cokie Roberts, on the Brinkley show, goes so far as to wonder if the Clintons might have turned out to be "taxaholics." (Surprise!)

The coercive utopians of the Left have their own complaints, seeing the media, rather bizarrely, as a steamroller for the status quo—a viewpoint you can sample regularly if you feel like tuning in to National Public Radio to hear your tax dollars at work. But it's certainly true that the media are hardly monolithic. There are rash recalcitrants here and there—George Will, John McLaughlin, Rush Limbaugh, Bob Novak. ABC's Brit Hume doesn't hesitate to point up Republican follies when that's deserved, as it frequently is, but he also has a disconcerting habit of putting politics in perspective. (How does he get along with Jennings?) And there are liberals whose intellectual honesty occasionally overpowers their prejudices—NBC's Tim Russert has been astringent in pointing out Clinton's flip-flops and lies, like the preposterous claim that our young President had to forget about middle-class tax cuts because he didn't know the extent of the deficit till he settled into the Oval Office. Despite the steadily advancing looniness of its editorial and op-ed pages, the *New York Times* carries political reporting—sometimes—that is acute, honest, and judicious, occasionally pointing out uncongenial truths even if reality does tend to get buried in the jump. David Rosenbaum, deep in a *Times* tax story December 8: "One popular misconception is that the Republican tax cuts caused the crippling federal deficit. . . . The fact is, the large deficit resulted because the government vastly increased what it spent each year, while tax revenues changed little."

Love affairs die hard, though. And in dreams begin responsibilities.

"Are Americans willing to sacrifice?"

It's Dan Rather, from his precarious perch on the lip of personal penury, opening the Evening News with a spot on the national debt. In fact, in the week before the President's economic message of February 17, Clintonesque talk of sacrifice pervaded the media to the point where you expected to hear

"There is no evidence to support any of the stories . . . living in the fishbowl is hard enough without worrying about a Secret Service that can't keep mum."
—Eleanor Clift on gossip about the Clintons, *Newsweek*, April 5, 1993

"If privacy ends where hypocrisy begins, Kitty Kelley's steamy exposé is a contribution to contemporary history. The revelations about the First Lady's 'promiscuous' lifestyle as a Hollywood starlet, her 'intimate relationship' with Frank Sinatra, and her eagerness for daughter Patti to undergo an abortion expose the cracks in the Reagans' family-values veneer."
—Eleanor Clift on Kitty Kelley's unsourced gossip, *Newsweek*, April 15, 1991

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any minute that the middle class had been asked to offer up its pitifully depleted supply of virgins for ritual slaughter before the House Ways and Means Committee.

"And we will return to fiscal responsibility and away from the la-la land of the Reagan–Bush era."—Sam Donaldson.

But it's more than simple politics. The press—and especially television—loves heroes. It adores villains. "Get me plenty of S&O, babes." Shock and Outrage.

NBC's celebrated dishonesty in the trashing of General Motors and its presentation of stunned fish as dead fish to drive home an environmental point (the visual lie was "inadvertent," of course) were widely seen as sensationalism run wild, in the unquenchable thirst for ratings. I think it's scarier than that: I think the overriding motives, not atypically, were altruistic—and more insidious *because* of the altruism, a growing assumption that specific *truth* is a minor consideration so long as the message is correct.

You expected to hear that the middle class had been asked to offer up its pitifully depleted supply of virgins for ritual slaughter before the House Ways and Means Committee.

I saw the phenomenon at work when I was an associate producer (and de facto news editor) at NBC's local news operation in New York. Our consumer reporter, Betty Furness, pretty much had free rein. She and her producer were (are) nice ladies, and generally careful with the facts, but like others in their line of work they did tend to burn with the hard, gemlike flame of advocacy. As far as I know, nobody but me read their scripts critically, and that was only if I happened to have the time. I wasn't crazy about the tenor of many of the reports—my membership in Nader's Raiders lapsed some time ago—but what did I know? No practical way to check the information, given the constraints of time. Occasionally, however, I noticed apparent mistakes or questionable internal logic—and they appreciated the editorial backstop. When I left NBC (my idea, in case you're wondering), Betty and her producer made a special trip to the newsroom to tell me good-bye and Godspeed. And I appreciated that. The point, however, is that the general lack of neutral editorial supervision isn't fair to the reporters themselves.

The advocates in the media—at NBC and elsewhere—may be a little more careful, for a while, in the wake of the GM fiasco. But the political environment isn't likely to change much. And the message does get across; writers and reporters soon discover what goes and what doesn't. Which doesn't necessarily make them whores: as others have noted, journalism tends to attract people whose outlook already reflects prevailing liberal orthodoxies. Like me. I was a Stevensonian Democrat when I started out, at United Press, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and the *Washington Post*, and when I moved to NBC in New York in the 1960s. But for better or for worse, I'm a bit of a contrarian, and for me the television experience had a perverse effect, seducing me from the paths of political purity.

I used to work as a field producer (a job category that included reporting and writing), and in the 1970s, at WNBC-TV, field producers had considerable freedom to do stories they found interesting. One of my first was a look at the appalling plague of housing abandonment in the South Bronx, and as I dug into the subject I learned a lot, not only about the disastrous economics of rent control but about the social pathologies (vandalism, rent delinquency) that finally push structurally sound buildings over the edge, and about the incredible mess of the housing courts, and the bias in the laws that made it all but impossible to evict destructive tenants. I also saw, first-hand, the pernicious effect of attempts to coerce racial balance in the schools, attempts that eventually doomed racial integration in much of New York by driving out so many whites that "balance" became numerically impossible. Lowering of standards in the police and fire departments to accommodate women and minorities. The unintended damage done by welfare in the era of John Lindsay and Come-and-Get-It Ginsberg, a city "human resources" commissioner who thought the way to beat poverty, essentially, was just to give welfare to anyone who asked for it.

For me, the cumulative result was a rethinking of most of my preconceptions. I did not, however, observe a comparable process among most of my colleagues, and I'm not sure why. Perhaps—in New York, anyway—the political prejudices that pervade the newsroom are just too strong. And in this atmosphere, the basically apolitical types (possibly a majority) are inclined to go along.

People with a different point of view—like my own, as it evolved—can find themselves in a more or less constant adversarial role. And if you don't want to turn into a sour, nay-saying curmudgeon, of dubious ideological respectability, you pick your fights carefully and compromise more than your ideas of journalistic responsibility might otherwise permit.

I thought, for instance, that most of our news reports on South Africa were, in tone and substance, little more than unlabeled editorials that not only ignored the agonizing complexities but frequently got a little careless about facts. Let me quote from a script written in 1985: "Imagine it: Instead of Manhattan it is Johannesburg. . . . If you are a black man, you probably don't live with your family; instead, you barely exist in sweltering dormitories with the other 'workers.' It is a completely segregated and degrading environment for 20 million people."

But wait a minute: Most black men in South Africa did *not* live away from their families in dormitories, sweltering or otherwise. Foreign workers often did, but they made up only a fraction of the labor force (and incidentally came to the country voluntarily, for its economic opportunities). And South Africa, in 1985, was not "completely segregated." A number of racial barriers—in public accommodations, for instance—had recently fallen.

So did that mean I liked the South African regime? No. Did I consider apartheid a moral disaster? Yes. But I pruned the inaccuracies (forget about the tone) from that script only at the price of creating a marked tension between me and its author (whom I happened to like very much), reinforcing unspoken assumptions about political

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motives on my part, if not closet racialism. You can get a certain reputation.

I do not, by the way, exclude myself from the tendency to use the power of television to peddle one's own views. I remember, not proudly, cutting interviews, during the Vietnam era, to make defenders of the war look as bumbling and stupid as possible. I like to think that experience and maturity not only changed my political views but put a brake on my passions and led to a fairer approach, but one of the unfortunate side-effects of the prevailing ideological winds, if you bend against them, is to increase the temptation to weight things more heavily in the other direction if you get a chance.

EDITORIAL problems are compounded by television's sheer technical complexity, and by the brutal time pressures. The anchor people have some clout, but the pace of local news is so frenetic that even a smart, prestigious, and generally fair-minded pro like Chuck Scarborough at WNBC-TV has only limited influence on the overall package that goes on the air.

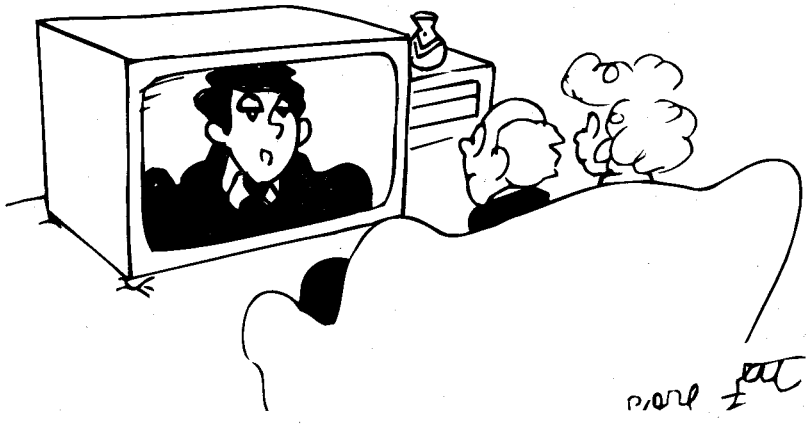
The assignment desk and the producers who block out the shows have more to do with deciding which stories to include and which to ignore. One episode I recall involved the minor-league scandal at the Environmental Protection Agency during the Reagan Administration. The hearings were by no means uniformly gripping, and some of the sound bites we got from NBC's syndication service were, to be kind, marginal. And as a New York local show we often skipped Washington news entirely. On the other hand, our producer happened to detest Reagan. So night after night we saw EPA bureaucrats Ann Burford and Rita Whatever-Her-Name-Was talking defensively about aspects of the affair that were unclear or impossibly convoluted or insignificant and just plain insignificant and boring. Our modest part in reminding the folks out there that *this* was the sleazy Administration they had voted into power.

I have to say that Jerry Nachman, my favorite news director (later the editor of the *New York Post* and now an expatriate in Santa Fe), was troubled by our leftish editorializing under the guise of reporting the news. For one thing, Jerry has an open mind; he likes stories he calls "counter-intuitive," like maybe a landlord victimized by irresponsible tenants (if that's where the story leads). For another, he did care about "balance," and worried, quite legitimately, about appearances. At one point he told an august assemblage of reporters, producers, and editors (I paraphrase from memory): "By God, if you don't knock it off I swear I'm going to fill this newsroom up with conservatives and see how you like it—they're mean people." I think the "mean people" part was a prejudice Jerry wouldn't necessarily defend, but in any case he was hardly serious about the threat. I mean even without union problems, where in New York could you recruit a newsroom full of conservatives?

My own annoyance boiled over around November 1984. One of our advocacy journalists in particular—Dave Marash, now with *Nightline*—was wearing his heart on his mike with ever more abandon. And I got so irate at what I regarded, overall, as our (and NBC network's) slanted, anti-Reagan election coverage that I made an issue of it, quite passionately, at one of our post-mortems. Scarborough and John Hambrick, his co-anchor, backed me up. A couple of days later, we proposed—and got Jerry's immediate approval for—a series of special reports on bias in the media, with me as the producer and Scarborough as the reporter. It ran during the February sweeps, heavily advertised under the promotion department's title, "Who Decides What's News?"

We didn't do quite what we had in mind, for reasons that should have been clear to me from the start: It would have been nice to take clips from election coverage and analyze them for bias. But how can you trash your own guys like that? Especially since the other networks wouldn't be about to permit use of *their* clips for a project like this. So we looked at the way TV covers things like crime and race and Bernie Goetz.

Still, there were problems getting it all on the air. Ordinarily, in line with the advice of the ratings consultants, a sweeps series was supposed to come in three parts in the middle of the week. We did nine—Jerry, in the rashness of the moment, having more or less given us carte blanche. But after the first three segments had aired I ran into more and more resistance in getting the remaining six into subsequent broadcasts. To be fair, that was partly because sweeps month is a time of tight shows and you cannot, as producers like to say, pile ten pounds of it into a five-pound bag. But there is considerable flexibility even during sweeps, and the resistance, I still feel, had something to do with the nature of the series. Part Six, about TV bias against nuclear energy, had to be whittled down to the vanishing point. Part Nine, mainly a media critique by an articulate black conservative named Myrtle Whitmore, clearly rubbed the show producer and the managing editor the wrong way and died in the screening room. And Part Eight, a fairly sympathetic look at the way the police feel about their television image and its effect on morale, made air only with the addition of a long, superfluous introduction underlining our unflagging abhorrence of police brutality. If only I had done segments putting a positive spin on one government program or another. "Biologist Pettigrew doesn't have the an-



"The following opinions are not necessarily those of this station or any sane person."

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swer to guppy aggression against goldfish, but she thinks she's on the verge of finding it—if only the federal grant money doesn't run out."

THE POLITICAL consensus that dominates the press, of course, both shapes and is shaped by the culture at large, as its various components—news media, publishing, academia, the foundations, the entertainment industry—amble along together, reinforcing each other in amiable symbiosis. It's true that the press sometimes takes a jaundiced look at the puerile leftism of Hollywood. Abe Rosenthal, in the *Times*, wrote a scathing column recently on the way the movies routinely demonize America. But by and large the news and the hybrid offshoots like Donahue and Geraldo and Oprah and Larry King are happily in tune with, say, the sentiments so proudly on display at this year's Oscar festivities, the fatuous flaunting of red ribbons against AIDS, purple ribbons against urban violence, green ribbons against insensitivity toward the rain forest, pink ribbons against breast cancer. (One Hollywood source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told me that plans are afoot for a chartreuse ribbon, to protest genital herpes, but I wasn't able to confirm it independently.)

There is, however, one notable counterweight to the prevailing media ambiance: talk radio. And I think it would be difficult to overlook the importance of its portly star forward, Rush Limbaugh—both because of the huge number of people he reaches and because his informed, common-sense conservatism is so contagious.

The outpouring of public opinion that helped produce the Zoë Baird, Kimba Wood, and gays-in-the-military embarrassments led to much fluttering in the media dovecote about the putative power of "Thug Radio," as the *Times*'s Anthony Lewis calls it.

Talk radio may play a role in firing up the troops, but the orchestration thesis is largely imaginary—Limbaugh, for instance, doesn't give out phone numbers or urge people to call Washington. And in any case the medium is hardly the exclusive or even unbalanced province of "the religious right and conservative extremists" Mr. Lewis sees lurking behind every microphone. The leading talk station in New York, WABC, broadcasts not only Limbaugh's nationally syndicated show and the like-minded, locally renowned Bob Grant, but also ex-Mayor Ed Koch—"a liberal with *sanity*," as he describes himself—and, further left, an engaging but woolly-minded true believer named Lynn Samuels. Until recently, WABC also featured a frothing-at-the-mouth feminist named Joy Behar, but she got fired in May, presumably because the ratings for her heady mixture of political commentary and general misinformation were starting to fall off. I tuned Joy in one day in March and heard an old colleague from NBC days, Felipe Luciano, informing us that "Africans taught the Greeks everything they knew." No demurrer from Joy. And if you like your black racism straight and strong, just turn the dial to New York's WLIB for the anti-white and anti-Semitic diatribe *du jour*.

Limbaugh, though, is unique, a crazy combination of showman, teacher, and popularizer. One of the exasperating things about most media stars—even committed partisans like Bryant Gumbel and his counterpart on *Weekend Today*, Scott Simon—is their pretense of impartiality. One of the most refreshing things about Limbaugh is his openness, the complete up-frontness of his politics. His shameless self-promotion is schtick so exaggerated as to amount to poking fun at himself, but no smelly little orthodoxy is safe. His subversive parodies are merciless, skewering the Kennedys, "environmentalist wackos," "feminazis," the Clinton Administration ("America Held Hostage"). I love his "updates"—environmental (to the sound of chain-saws), animal rights (Andy Williams singing "Born Free" amid escalating gunfire), and the latest condom news ("My Beautiful Balloon"). My personal favorite, during the late election campaign, was a horror-movie send-up starring Bill Clinton as "Taxula" and his sidekick "Algore." "Commmmme, Algore, let us go to Connngggress. I am hongggry! Haaah haaah haaah haaah haaah."

The media establishment doesn't know quite how to respond. The *Times* didn't deign to review Limbaugh's book, *The Way Things Ought to Be*, until it had been on the best-seller list for 23 weeks, then finally came up with a snide appreciation by TV critic Walter Goodman. A couple of weeks later, *Times* movie critic Caryn James went on at length about how Michael Douglas's movie *Falling Down*, with its white middle-class berserker, was "custom-made for the rabidly conservative Rush Limbaugh crowd." And President Clinton himself weighed in, at the White House correspondents' dinner May 1, observing jovially that Limbaugh "took up for Janet Reno" after she was verbally mugged over Waco by Michigan Congressman John Conyers. "He just did it," Mr. Clinton said, "because she was attacked by a black guy."

But something happened. 'Sixty zillion' of Raspberry's own readers angrily defended Limbaugh, and Raspberry—honest man—apologized in print.

In short, "Limbaugh is a bigot." That's William Raspberry, the (black) syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post*. Raspberry had written something to the effect that servicemen who favor keeping the ban on open gays in the military might not necessarily be homophobic brutes, and Limbaugh had commended the column on the air. Raspberry wasn't having any: He wanted no praise, he wrote, from a man so good at "tossing the raw meat of bigotry to people who need desperately to feel superior to somebody."

But something happened. A lot of Raspberry's own readers—"sixty zillion" of them, according to the columnist—angrily defended Limbaugh, and Raspberry—honest man—not only admitted that he had gotten his opinion second-hand, but, after he'd listened to some radio tapes and browsed through the Limbaugh book, apologized in print: "I'm sorry, Rush." Not so sorry that he'd become a Limbaugh fan, Raspberry said, but "when a caller asked me, quite reasonably, to give him an instance or two of a bigoted quote from Limbaugh, all he got was my embarrassed silence."

And it's true. Unlike a lot of people across the fruited plain—and unlike a lot of Republican politicians—Limbaugh simply refuses to be intimi-

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dated by the thought police. He's heavy on hyperbole. But his attacks on the follies of the Religious Left carry the weight they do precisely because he's *not* a "racist" or a woman-hater or a hater of any kind. So the guardians of compassion have to set up a straw man, the Demon Rush conjured up by Anthony Lewis and Caryn James and—until investigation and honesty carried the day—William Raspberry. Another media myth. But given the reality, a myth that's getting harder and harder to sustain—in April, Tim Russert even had Limbaugh on *Meet the Press.*

IN THE medieval past, the power and influence of Catholic Christianity was indeed ubiquitous and often repressive. Political thought control was polished to perfection by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. But there is no precedent in human history for the revolution in technology that has produced the pervasive power of television to mold public perceptions, buttressed by the more traditional liberal media that it feeds on for its dominant ideas—like, paradigmatically, the *New York Times.*

As the *Times* has lurched leftward, it can be pretty amusing on the subject of journalistic objectivity. The prospect that Rupert Murdoch would return as publisher of the sorely beset *New York Post* produced a blistering *Times* editorial urging us not to harbor any illusions that the "tarnished savior," with his "reflexive conservatism," is a "healthy influence on American journalism." A *Times* news story by Martin Gottlieb pointedly noted "charges that [Murdoch] has freely trampled over the wall that has traditionally separated the news columns of a newspaper from its owner's political interests." As though the Sulzbergers never pay any attention to news selection or placement or emphasis or tone, or to which reporters and editors get hired and promoted.

Ever on the cusp of attitudinal reform, the *Times* is starting to sound at times like a tonier version of Sally Jessy Raphael. On one notable day in March, it devoted two-thirds of its op-ed page to a windy scholarly disquisition by one Anne Fausto-Sterling, the burden of which was that hermaphroditism should not be viewed as an unfortunate biological accident but rather as just another manifestation of humanity's infinite variety, presenting copulative possibilities worthy of the same social approbation as homosexuality if more conventionally constructed people would just lighten up. Only connect.

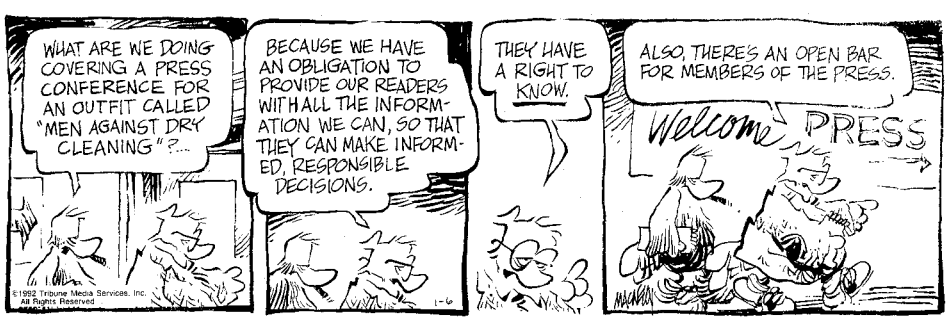
In New York's running battle over sex and the schools, the *Times* led the way as the progressive press enlisted early and vociferously on behalf of Schools Chancellor Joe Fernandez's "rainbow curriculum." News stories in the *Times*—and just about everywhere else, in the press and on TV—almost invariably referred to the new approach (devised by a lesbian ideologue in the education bureaucracy) as an attempt to teach "tolerance" or "respect" for homosexuals. But whether or not that kind of pedagogic agenda is such a terrific idea to start with, any less committed observer could tell from the designated teaching aids (*Heather Has Two Mommies*, *Daddy's Roommate*, explanations of anal intercourse and a glossary of sexual paraphernalia like "dental dams") that the aim was not simply "tolerance" for homosexual practice and "lifestyle" but approbation. Advocacy might be an even more precise term: teachers were encouraged to toss in positive discussions of homosexuality at any and every opportunity, even for first-graders. When Fernandez was finally fired by the school board we got another round of editorial sorrow at the narrow-mindedness of all those bigots out in Queens who had forced the issue.

My own opinion is that sexual orientation is not a matter of choice for most people, but that social pressures do influence sexual roles, in some and perhaps many cases, and not always with negative results for the individual involved. But in any case, the issue raises the most profound questions about society's stake in conventional family life and about the primary reason for sexual morality—that is, the psychological health and material well-being of children. Those renegades out in Queens understand that very well. To the *Times*, however, any reservations about "gay rights" are simple "bigotry," which is fast becoming the most overused word since "dysfunctional."

It may be, even from my own perspective, that the constant overt and implicit sermonizing of the mass media on behalf of all the current shibboleths—gay rights, doctrinaire feminism, environmental hysteria, multiculturalism, the blessings of "diversity"—has its healthy side, that it has played an important role in keeping the dragons of intolerance at bay. But I think the overall effect is far from benevolent—this may be the first society in history that has deliberately set out to promote its own fragmentation. And beyond its overall bias in favor of liberals and Democrats, there are two areas in particular, I think, where the media have let the country down. The first is medicine.

"'A health care plan that would start when you're born and then end when you die, and would be, like, paid for by a tax on cigarettes and beer and wine.'

"Weighty thoughts," according to NBC's George Lewis, "from a kid forced to grow up in a hurry."


WHAT ARE WE DOING COVERING A PRESS CONFERENCE FOR AN OUTFIT CALLED "MEN AGAINST DRY CLEANING"?...
BECAUSE WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE OUR READERS WITH ALL THE INFORMATION WE CAN, SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE INFORMED, RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS.
THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW.
ALSO, THERE'S AN OPEN BAR FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS.
Welcome PRESS
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The kid is ten-year-old Walter Dawson of Fall City, Oregon, and the story is poignant: His father, much older than his mother, has Alzheimer's, has to be in a nursing home, and the family has been devastated financially. Money set aside for Walter's college education, the narration tells us, had to go instead to pay for long-term care.

The pathos is real. What's false is the suggestion—and you get it over and over on television news—that solutions are easier than they in fact are, the implication in this case that

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the Dawsons would make it all right if only the government would come up with a program for long-term care.

As well they might. So might the desperate woman who wants a $150,000 bone-marrow transplant that could give her a 25 per cent chance of beating breast cancer. A premature baby, saved at the cost of half a million dollars, whose chances of anything like a normal life may be minimal at best. Dialysis; kidney transplants; $300,000 liver transplants, even for alcoholics. Open-heart surgery. Extended psychotherapy. Prolonged intensive care for aged people who can't possibly recover; months or years of expensive, dubiously effective drugs and terminal care for AIDS patients. The problem is that the particular cases that tug at the heartstrings so powerfully on television are multiplied thousands, even millions of times; the entire gross national product probably wouldn't be enough to give everything to everybody who could benefit from the marvels of modern medicine.

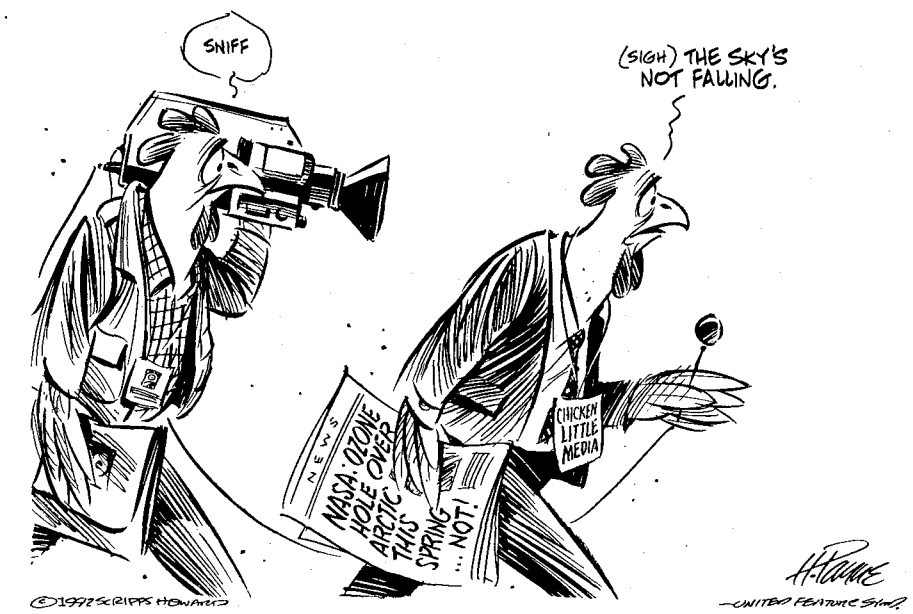
Doctors fees, drug prices, bureaucratic inefficiency, ambulance-chasing lawyers, the shocking cost of malpractice insurance—of course they all contribute to the troubles of American medicine. But what lies at the heart of the dilemma is not pure economics but philosophy, a medical and legal ethic left far behind the headlong advance of medical technology.

It may be unreasonable to expect the press and television to cultivate a tragic sense of life. But reality imposes its own limits, and the sentimentality that's the curse of the media is only making amelioration tougher. Good luck, Hillary.

THE SECOND area I would point to is the painful question of race.

I used to work with Carl Stokes. Now a judge back in Ohio, he was at NBC in New York for several years in the 1970s, as an on-air talent, after stepping down as mayor of Cleveland. Carl was (and presumably still is) a political liberal, whose commitment to black causes was outspoken and unquestioned. But he wasn't inclined to avert his eyes from reality either—at one point he created something of a stir in the newsroom by asking a black welfare mother, on camera, why she kept having children and expecting the taxpayers to foot the bill.

I found his brand of honesty to be typical of the ordinary black people I talked to, in the course of doing stories on housing, schools, welfare, and other social questions; most of them were searingly frank about the social disaster around them. One fairly ambitious series I did with Carl was about black-on-black crime, and my most vivid memory is an interview with a pleasant, soft-spoken old woman at an Episcopal Church in Harlem. Carl asked her about the effect crime was having on her personally, and the softness suddenly vanished. "It's like a gauntlet," she said. "I get off the bus to go to my apartment and there they are"—the neighborhood hoodlums, the teen-age sharks. "If I had a gun," she said, I'd shoot every last one of them."



The verbal violence was exceptional, but you're likely to get variations on the theme all over the city. If you want an earful on crime, go to a senior center in a black neighborhood like Bedford-Stuyvesant. And you won't hear many excuses about poverty, racism, and social injustice—these beleaguered old people know all about that, but mainly they just see predators for what they are. Predators.

But what do we get in the press and television? Stories about crime and pathology? Sure. The press focuses on black-on-white crime if the victim is prominent or the circumstances are particularly shocking and brutal, as in the case of the Central Park jogger. It turns its attention for a day or two to the latest fatal shooting of a black child caught in some ghetto crossfire. But what really turns it on is a juicy white-on-black crime, like Howard Beach or Bensonhurst. The *Times*, for instance, long persisted in referring to the "murder" of Michael Griffith, who was chased by a gang of whites in Howard Beach and ran onto a highway where he was killed by a car. In fact, a racially mixed jury returned convictions not of murder but of manslaughter, and there is reasonable doubt that the young whites intended to chase Griffith onto the highway, let alone with murder in their hearts. (The Howard Beach defendant who got the stiffest sentence—Jon Lester, who is still in jail—has black friends who think he was railroaded by a legal and political establishment that feared a racial explosion, partly because of the hysteria whipped up by the press.)

The Rodney King tape, over and over and over, almost always abbreviated in a way that distorted context and all but ruled out perspective, with seldom any mention of the fact that the other blacks in the car with King did not resist the cops and were not harmed. The sometimes explicit statements by *news reporters* after the second trial of the L.A. cops that justice had finally been served, if only partially—which may be true, but which remains a matter not of news but of opinion. And like the movies, the press revels in dredging up bitter, violent memories of an admittedly guilty but bygone America, making sure that old, half-healed wounds are kept open and bleeding. Our Lady of Perpetual Guilt.

Ideas have consequences, and when the ideas are purveyed dishonestly—

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for the purest ends, of course—the effects on society and on individuals can be devastating. A case now before the Supreme Court offers a concrete example. It involves the constitutionality of Wisconsin's "hate crimes" law, and specifically the sentence meted out to a young black man, Todd Mitchell, because he and some friends beat a 14-year-old boy senseless purely because the boy was white. I won't go into the perversion of both criminal justice and common sense in the whole idea of stiffer sentences for "hate crimes." What interests me here is the way the current cultural and media climate can lead to mayhem in real life.

The boy, Gregory Reddick, has recovered, but he was in a coma for four days—"nearly stomped to death," according to a prosecutor. The young blacks assaulted him because they were outraged over a movie they had just seen, *Mississippi Burning*, especially one sequence in which a Klansman assaults a young black boy as the child kneels in fearful prayer outside a church, kicking him, stomping him, leaving him prostrate and writhing. What the news stories on the Mitchell case have not noted, even in passing, is that *Mississippi Burning* is an inflammatory piece of propaganda and that the scene that propelled Todd Mitchell over the edge was pretty much made up out of whole cloth. According to a black civil-rights worker named James McPherson, the incident of the black boy attacked outside the church was based on a woman named Beatrice Cole, who, about to be beaten by the Klan, asked if she could kneel and pray. But then "the Lord was there," McPherson quotes Mrs. Cole as saying later, "because then the man said, 'Let her alone' and he looked kind of sick about it."

So an actual incident suggesting what McPherson grudgingly calls "a slight moral sense" on the part of even a degenerate Klansman becomes, in *Mississippi Burning*, an episode of absolute, implacable cruelty. And that suggests a helpful rule of thumb for this kind of moviemaking: take all the barbarity you can find in the record, and if it's not barbarous enough to drive home your point—well, doctor it up until it is. Send a message.

Todd Mitchell got the message. How many others? Most people won't act on it in such a crazy and brutal way. But how many others?

So many messages. So many lies. In the movies, on television, in the press. Unrelieved white guilt. Unqualified black victimization. A liberal racism that patronizes blacks, condescends to blacks, refuses to hold blacks accountable. Understand the rage.

But let me pull a punch. Intellectual honesty is by no means banished from the news media, in racial or other areas. Plenty of news people, including those with strong convictions different from my own, are still willing to follow a story where it leads, not just where they want it to lead.

But the garden path is strewn with temptations. By their very nature, the print press and television are perhaps predisposed to activist government: movement, drama, strong verbs. Add to that the currents of fashionable thought and what you get, all too often, is an infatuation with state-imposed "solutions," an affinity for fixing things that aren't broken and maybe breaking things that work. And all those alluring opportunities can become irresistibly seductive if you feel a mission to enlist the news in the service of a Higher Morality. □

Reliable Sources

PETER SHAW

WHOEVER goes to work each day in the downtowns of America's cities is obliged to endure the advances or step over the bodies of innumerable derelicts. But when the editors and reporters of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* step inside their offices to report, let us say, the day's murder by a deranged drifter, they will do so with the most exquisite sensibility. The killer is a "Mr." Jones, unfairly forced out of his lodgings several years ago, and since then repeatedly denied employment by indifferent, rapacious capitalists. In other words, we must suffer not only all the outrages accompanying our society's catastrophic decline of civility, but also the systematic distortion of our sufferings by ideologically inspired euphemism and misrepresentation.

It is hardly necessary to detail where reality is going to continue being misrepresented. In the newspapers, perpetrators will continue to appear as victims of disadvantaged upbringings. From television news we will continue to be instructed that rioting thugs are reacting to the middle class's indifference to their plight. In television dramas, the outstanding threat to public order will remain racist Southern sheriffs and their redneck supporters.

In the movies one of the most pressing problems of the age—after Wall Street greed—will go on being the Hollywood blacklist of the 1950s. It seems that screenwriters and actors suffered more in that period than the masses enslaved behind the Iron Curtain.

In a politically correct world, in short, the search for reasonably persuasive representations of reality is going to remain a discouraging one. Yet such representations can be ferreted out. What follows is a guide for those who would like, every once in a while, to have their sense of reality at least partly confirmed.

For an objective presentation and assessment of individuals unrelated to race, ethnicity, or supposed social disadvantages, there is nothing like sports. As a player, one always knows the score about oneself. One is a 16-handicap golfer or else an 18-handicap golfer who can drive the ball 160 yards or 150 yards; one's tennis serve can or cannot regularly be returned by the lady on the other side of the net in mixed doubles; one knows one's best possible time for swimming the quarter-mile. It is of course nice to have a good attitude, team spirit, be a good loser and winner. But none of these changes the final score, which one always wants to have straight.

Mr. Shaw is finishing his latest book, Recovering American Literature.

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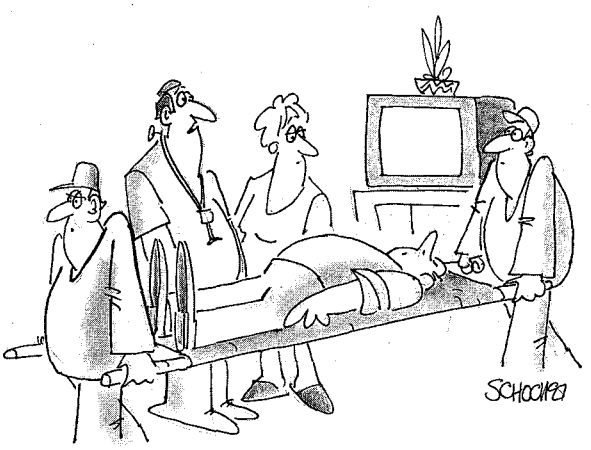
To a great extent the score is still the primary thing in professional spectator sports as well. Therefore when enlightened dinner companions complain about inflated salaries paid to star athletes, remember that the rising attendance driving ticket prices upward is a product of social need, not a mere desire for diversion. The population is increasingly obliged to turn to sports for displays of unapologetic superiority and outcomes not subject to civil-rights litigation. The objective atmosphere reaches as far as television and newspaper reporting and even commentary on sports. Unlike their colleagues on the news side, at least some sports writers dispense praise and blame as it is deserved.

THE SHARP split between the objective representation found in the sports pages and the subjective slant in the news pages of prestige newspapers is less pronounced in the tabloid press. The blaring headlines of its front pages share the vivid directness—and the accuracy—of the sports headlines on the back page. From the tabloid press's stories of mayhem, rape, and murder one receives a clear accounting of exactly who did what to whom. Which is to say that one is witness to the very chronicle of society that the prestige press attempts to hide or disguise with its pieties.

The tabloids also carry the valuable reporting of gossip columnists, who almost alone among members of the media understand the decisive roles played in society and government by sexual passion, ambition, vanity, and the other eternal human failings. Needless to say, the most sneered at tabloid headline in history exactly illustrates the shortcomings of the newspapers of record. "Headless Body in Topless Bar," the *New York Post* informed its readers on April 15, 1983. "Such vulgarity! Such cheap sensationalism and pandering to low tastes!" exclaimed the tasteful classes. But the headline was accurate, and there was at least as much social significance in this story as in anything the *New York Times* informed its readers about on the same day.

The headline writer, in fact, challenged in the most effective way imaginable the received opinion of the age about topless bars and related phenomena. Sexual license, it is widely accepted, releases bottled up aggression, thereby acting as a safety valve for the violent passions. Not so, implied the *Post* headline, with far greater realism and insight. Your topless bar is the sort of place, along with whorehouses, redlight districts, dirty-movie houses, and pornographic book shops, from which violence is likely to go forth and in which violence is likely to occur.

At 8 P.M. on that fateful night in 1983, Herbie's topless bar in Queens was empty except for the owner, his wife, a waitress, and a topless dancer in a G-string, when patron Charles Dingle walked in and began to talk as though he thought he could "shake down" the joint. The owner, presumably a rough and ready type judging by his ownership of a string of topless bars, got into a fight with Dingle, who killed him with a shot to the head from a .22-caliber automatic. Dingle tied up the women in the back room and raped the dancer.



"It's quite common these days—it's a news overdose."

At 10 P.M. the next customer knocked at the door and Dingle let her in. Invaluable New York sociological reality: a single woman is the only customer patronizing a provincial topless bar at 10 P.M., and her profession—as Dingle determined by promptly going through her handbag—is that of mortician. The murderer-rapist's profession is that of security guard, though he is also (here reflecting the city's unique juridical culture) a robbery parolee. Mr. Dingle, reasoning that he can be traced by the fatal bullet, instructs the mortician to remove it. When her probes fail to locate it, he instructs her instead to sever the owner's head, which he packs in a wooden wine carton.

More sociology: Dingle releases the dancer at 4 A.M. and the waitress at 5, but neither of them contacts the police ("don't get involved"). The remainder of the story is routine. At 6 A.M. Dingle phones for a gypsy cab, which he steals (remember, he is a robbery parolee), tying up the driver and throwing him in the bathroom. He takes the severed head, the owner's wife, and the mortician, and he drives off. When he proceeds to fall asleep behind the wheel the women escape and bring a transit patrolman to the car to arrest Dingle.

The *Post*'s headline was equal to the event. With its trochaic rhythm—always rare in English verse and therefore always reminiscent of its source in early Greek tragedy—the line implied the appropriate ancient truth about sex, violence, and death: "Hēadlĕss Bŏdў ĭn Tōplĕss Bār." Furthermore, the line enjoined its ancient truth on the reader with a metaphysically witty beginning and ending repetition of the suffix "-less." The resultant juxtaposition of two apparently unrelated kinds of toplessness conjoined sex and death even as they are conjoined in reality. (In 1993 the *Post* remains a valuable source of reality, but has perhaps lost some of its panache. A recent headline rather stolidly reported: "Bloody Rampage: Teen Chops Heads Off Dad, Cat & Parakeet.")

Had ancient Rome known a tabloid press—one specializing, let us say, in depredations and excesses committed by the Goths, Visigoths, and Vandals—we may be sure that the respectable element in society would have shunned its reports in disdain. Yet, like the great realist literary works through the ages, tabloid journalism usefully supplies cautionary examples where the *New York Times* offers the ever dull and useless platitudes of the establishment. □

Reprints of "The Decline of American Journalism" may be ordered for $2 each; bulk price available upon request. Send to: NATIONAL REVIEW, 150 East 35th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

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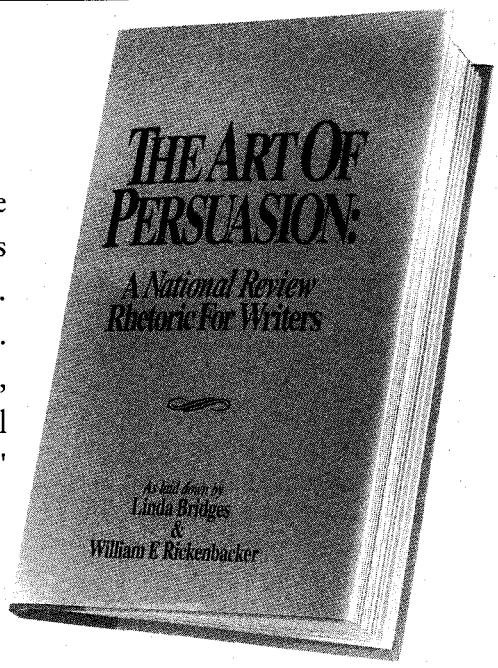

George F. Will...

"Readers of this book will improve themselves about that which matters most (Aristotle did define human beings as the language-using animals), and will smile all the while. Furthermore, this wise and funny book may rescue the idea of rhetoric from the faint taste of disreputableness that now attaches to it."

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help!!!

H. L. Schwadron

Say 'Hi' to Inflation

It's only a whiff, so I wouldn't
Assume it will do what it shouldn't,
But if I were Clinton
I'd leave with the Minton
Before the rates rise—but they *couldn't*.

W. H. VON DREELE

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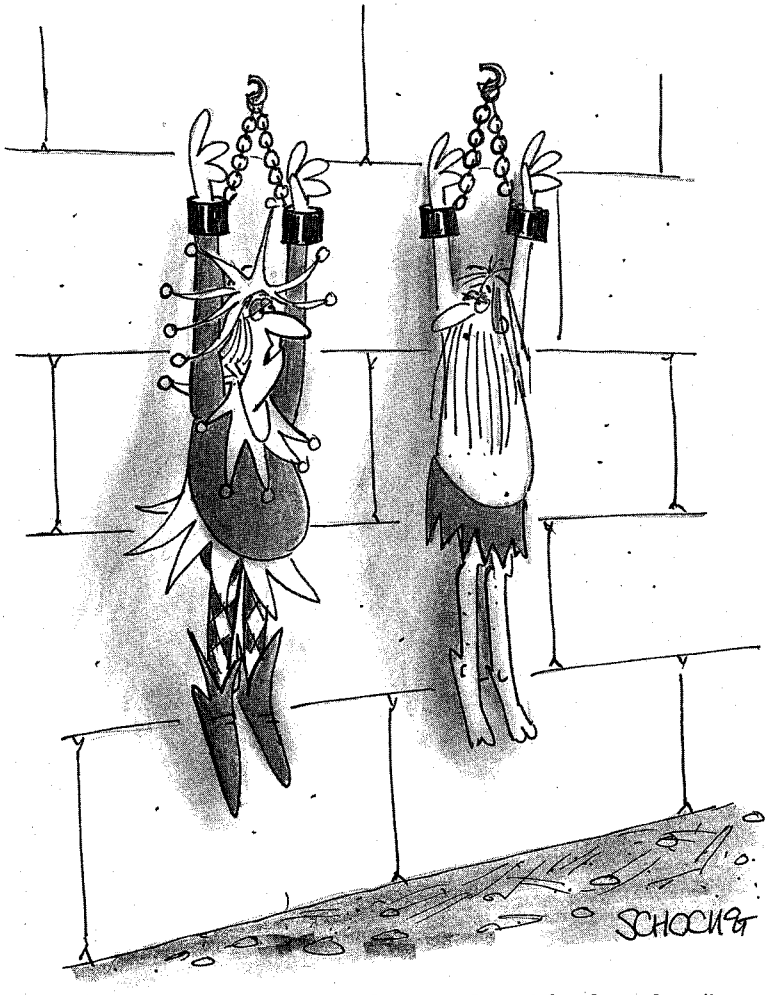

"The trouble is—nobody can take a joke these days."

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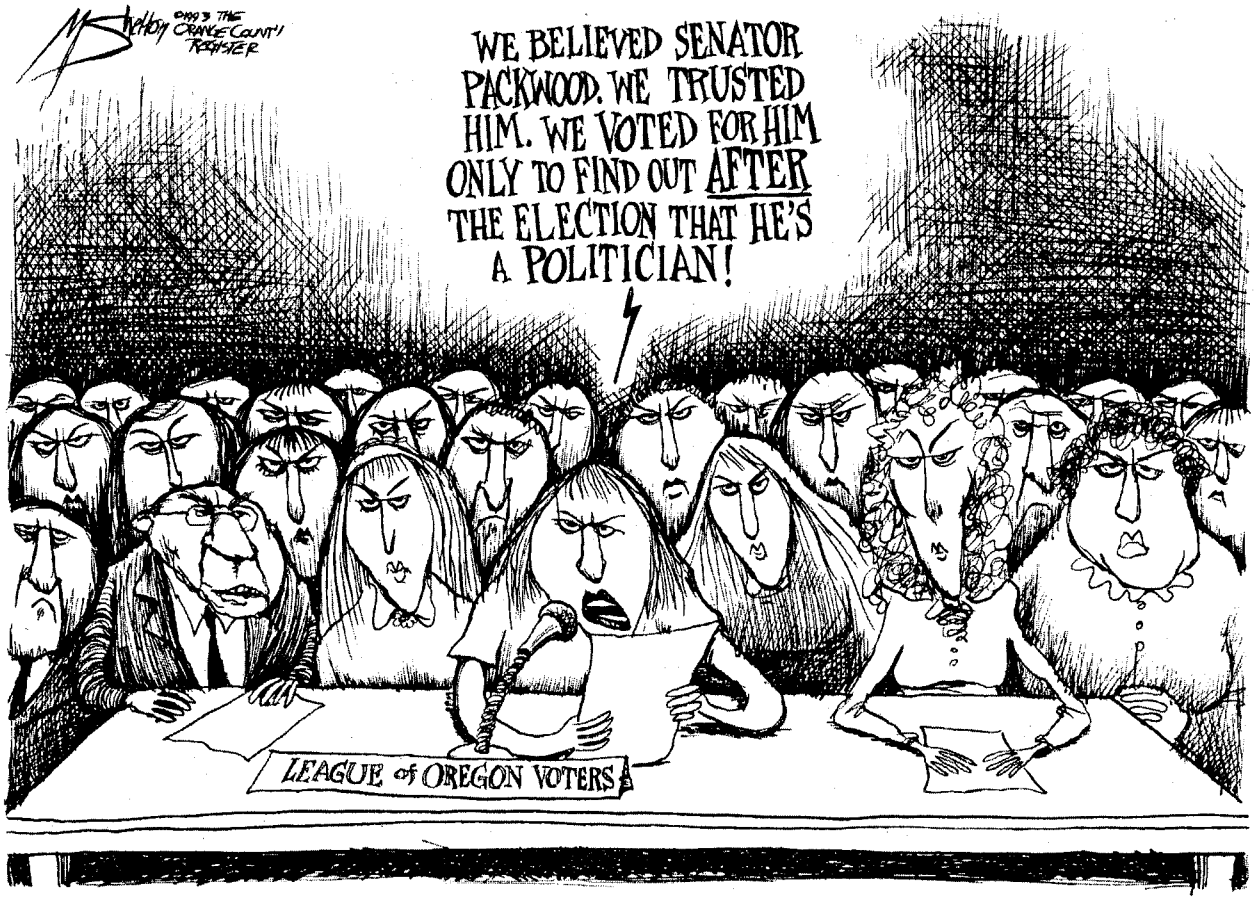
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WE BELIEVED SENATOR PACKWOOD. WE TRUSTED HIM. WE VOTED FOR HIM ONLY TO FIND OUT AFTER THE ELECTION THAT HE'S A POLITICIAN!
LEAGUE of OREGON VOTERS

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THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

May 28, 1993

Dear Rusty,

This is going to have to be a quick letter. I'm in my study at home, and Tipper is giving my hair a trim. And as soon as she's done with me, she's got to do the girls and Al Jr. She says "hi," by the way.

I wish you were here, Rusty. Things aren't going well, and you always know how to cheer me up. Bill and Hillary and I have such big plans—really, really big plans—for the country, that it's a shame they're all getting dragged down in pettiness. To hear the press tell it, nothing's happened in the past three months but the failure of the stimulus package, the failure to get a plan for Bosnia, the failure to get the health-care plan out by June, the failure to get the budget package passed intact. It's like the Timber Summit never happened! Boy, that makes me mad.

The worst part of the whole thing is how the three of us—HRC, Bill, and me—are getting along. I'll be totally honest with you, Rusty. I sense testiness from Bill aimed in my direction. Yes, this hurts. I'll admit it. But I don't blame him. The other day Bill and I were talking about the press, and how much they hate him, and I guess I said the wrong thing. I was trying to cheer him up, and so I reminded him that the press still likes me, especially The New Republic. "Use me as a mouthpiece," I said. "America still trusts me." Maybe it was my tone. I was only trying to help.

Later that afternoon, Bill gathered us all for a meeting about the health-care plan. We were trying to decide whether to offer a comprehensive, all-inclusive, taxpayer-financed plan, or a smaller, cheaper one. Lloyd Bentsen and Leon Panetta argued for the cheaper one. They think it will have an easier time passing Congress. HRC and Ira Magaziner argued for the full-out plan. Bill turned to me. "What do you think, Al?" he asked.

"Bill," I said, "I agree with Leon and Uncle Lloyd." In the end he sided with HRC, and I think it's because he was still mad about the New Republic thing.

As we were walking out of the office, I walked Uncle Lloyd and Robert Rubin to their car. Uncle Lloyd had that worried expression that he used to get whenever someone took his picture at Burning Tree. "Al," he asked, "do you think the President is getting good political advice?"

"You bet, Uncle Lloyd," I said.

He still looked uncomfortable. "How often does he consult with, say, Donna Shalala?" he asked.

"All the time," I answered. "She's been a real help finding a Supreme Court nominee."

We walked along silently for a minute, and stopped at the Treasury car. Uncle Lloyd turned to Bob. "Bob," he asked, "how old is the oldest partner at Goldman Sachs?"

"75, maybe," Bob answered.

"But there isn't a ceiling or anything, is there? I mean, if a person is talented and accomplished and has the right resume, it shouldn't matter at all how old that person is, should it?" Uncle Lloyd asked. Bob was about to answer, but Uncle Lloyd pulled him into the car and I waved as they drove off.

I went back to my office and stared out the window. Since Roy went over to Mack McLarty's office, things have been pretty quiet. I had just finished feeding the fish when HRC dropped by. It was the first time she had ever been in my office, and I was really touched by the gesture, especially since I had just sided against her in a meeting with Bill. She's a little jealous of Bill's and my friendship. What's strange is that Tipper isn't.

We had a nice chat. She was on her way to Texas, but she wanted to thank me for my views on health care, and told me how important it is for us all to be on the same team, especially now since the press hates us. "Everybody but you," she added. "Your numbers are still sky high. Of the three of us, you've got the highest approval rating." I shrugged. "Come on, Al," she said, "what's your secret?"

I thought about this for a minute. What's my secret, Rusty? I don't know if I have one.

"Just be yourself," I said. HRC stared at me for a long time. Then she kind of shook her head and turned to go. Before she did, she picked up from my desk the first couple of chapters of my new book, The Politics of Meaning. She flipped through them.

"Can I take this to read on the plane?" she asked.

"Sure," I said. To be totally honest, I wanted to say no. The chapters were still very rough, and there were sections that made no sense at all. I just didn't want HRC to see my thoughts in such a fuzzy state, but she had been so nice, and she genuinely wanted to read them, so I figured, what the heck?

Well, guess who's my biggest fan? HRC loved the chapters so much that she hasn't returned them. She keeps asking for more, and I keep telling her I'm too busy with the Government Reform Task Force (our six-month deadline is in August!) to write any more, but she's an impatient woman.

Gotta run. Tipper just snipped off a piece of my earlobe.

All the best, Al

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Stop, Thief!

HILTON KRAMER

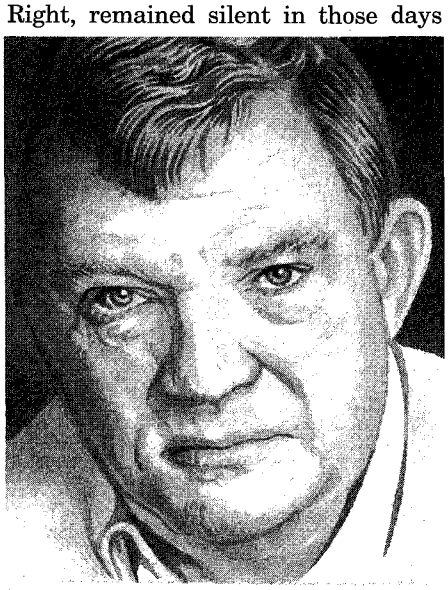
SOMETHING odd has lately erupted in the ranks of the liberal intelligentsia in America. The liberals are appropriating the arguments of conservative critics in a newly launched attack—new, that is, for the liberals—on contemporary cultural values. The liberals don't call the arguments conservative, of course, and the less scrupulous among them engage in elaborate stratagems designed to turn the arguments against the conservative writers who originated them in the 1980s. Yet on a whole range of issues that are now central to the heated political debate about cultural values in American life—multiculturalism, political correctness, the institution of the family, sexual morality, pop culture, educational standards, the politicization of the arts, and the social policies that impinge upon all of these matters—liberals are busily adopting the conservative critique of culture that emerged in the Reagan era while adapting it to the blame-the-conservatives agenda of the Clinton Administration.

Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America, by Robert Hughes (Oxford, 210 pp., $19.95)

The latest example of this intellectual scam is a popular book called *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America*, by Robert Hughes, the Australian émigré art critic for the now ultra-liberal *Time* magazine. This is the most blatant attempt that has yet been made by a media liberal to lay the principal blame for all the ills of American cultural life on conservative critics—myself among them—while adopting without acknowledgment a good many of the arguments they were the first to formulate in their battle with the radical Left. The result is both a falsification of recent history and a colossal act of intellectual bad faith.

Take, for instance, the way Mr. Hughes deals with the emergence of multiculturalism, the ideology of racial, ethnic, and sexual separatism that the radical Left has now succeeded in imposing on large areas of education, the arts, and social policy. This is the most divisive political development in America today, for it effectively denies the very possibility of a national culture in which all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin or sexual preference, can participate as equals. It is a development that conservative and neo-conservative intellectuals—many of them from immigrant families themselves—were the first to oppose when it made its initial assault on American society in the 1980s.

Liberals such as Mr. Hughes, having no stomach for confrontations with the militant Left and ever fearful of being identified with the conservative Right, remained silent in those days as the racial and sexual radicals successfully negotiated their long march through the institutions. While regularly denouncing Ronald Reagan and expressing their horrified distaste for Margaret Thatcher, the liberals stood mute in the face of the radical juggernaut. Their harshest criticism was reserved for *Commentary*, *The New Criterion*, and other conservative journals while they embraced without significant demurral the Left's lethal multiculturalist agenda.



Bonnie Gardner

Yet now, suddenly, with the sky positively black with chickens coming home to roost in precisely the way that conservatives had predicted, the air is filled with the jeremiads of liberals who can no longer deny the scale of the wreckage. *Culture of Complaint* is in this respect a representative specimen of liberal hypocrisy. Mr. Hughes now presents himself as an unaffiliated, above-the-battle analyst of the multiculturalist debacle. From the lofty perspective of this mythical "middle" ground, he straightaway complains about "neo-conservatives who create an exaggerated bogey called multiculturalism," and then, a few pages on, promptly compounds the hypocrisy by reprocessing at considerable length the basic arguments formulated by the conservatives—no doubt prematurely, in Mr. Hughes's view—in their campaign against the "bogey" he has just derided.

This bifocal approach to the politics of culture—it's OK if I say it, it has no legitimacy if they say it—disfigures the discussion of every urgent question in *Culture of Complaint*. Have the universities gone crazy in imposing destructive political standards on the study of literature, history, and the arts? Well, yes, says Mr. Hughes, and proceeds to rehearse the charges that conservative critics made all through the 1980s, but not before smearing with ridicule the critics—Allan Bloom, Roger Kimball, Dinesh D'Souza, et al.—whose widely read books (*The Closing of the American Mind*, *Tenured Radicals*, *Illiberal Education*) made this a subject of national debate while the author of *Culture of Complaint* was taking cover from the storm.

Has the radical Left's unremitting assault on the traditional family proved to have catastrophic consequences for American society? You bet it has, Mr. Hughes now says, and

Mr. Kramer is the editor of The New Criterion.

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blithely recommends as a model a family consisting of—guess what?—two married parents who love each other and their children. Yet he cannot bring himself to embrace this unexceptionable bit of good sense without first heaping scorn upon Dan Quayle for saying essentially the same thing during the fall election campaign. When the Republican Party took up the question of "family values," it was for Mr. Hughes "a coercive cliché," but when liberals like himself extol the same standard, it is suddenly believed to have some redeeming social value.

Far more honest and informative on this subject than anything you will find in *Culture of Complaint* was a twenty-page article called "Dan Quayle Was Right," published in the April *Atlantic*, itself a liberal journal that has suddenly awakened from its torpor. This article confirmed in abundant detail the former Vice President's basic charge that "the media depicts the married two-parent family as a source of pathology" while at the same time affirming "the liberating effects of divorce and nonmarital childbirth." Yet there isn't a whisper of acknowledgment in Mr. Hughes's book that Dan Quayle got the matter exactly right.

Even about a subject on which Mr. Hughes is supposed to be something of an expert—the contemporary art scene—*Culture of Complaint* woefully distorts recent history. "In matters of visual art, the American 'culture war' officially started on May 18, 1989," he writes. This was the date on which a controversy erupted in the U.S. Senate when it was discovered that the creator of a photographic work called *Piss Christ*, depicting a crucifix immersed in a container of the artist's urine, had received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, an agency of the Federal Government.

But to date the "culture war" in the art world from 1989, which was apparently when Mr. Hughes finally woke up to what had been going on for a decade or more, is simply to confuse history with autobiography. The fact is, Mr. Hughes hates the Left's politicization of the art scene as much as I do, and now at last he has some very telling things to say about it. But in true liberal fashion he simply didn't have the guts to address the subject until he could safely indict the political Right as a co-conspirator in the debacle that has overtaken the life of art in America.

And so it goes on virtually every page of *Culture of Complaint*, as Mr. Hughes exerts himself to occupy some liberal middle ground that, in the real world of politics and culture today, simply does not exist. As we see now every day with the Clinton Administration in Washington, it is still the radical Left that is calling the tune, and as long as liberals such as Mr. Hughes cannot bring themselves to acknowledge this obvious truth and suspend their slander of the conservatives from whom they have lately appropriated so many of their arguments, they will remain morally compromised. Behind all the bluster in *Culture of Complaint* there emerges a familiar phenomenon: the spectacle of the liberal mind suffering one of its periodic failures of nerve. □

In Search of AIDS

STEPHEN C. JOSEPH, M.D.

THE good news is that this is a very fine book.

The bad news is that almost everyone who reads it will end up angry, frustrated, and ill at ease. This is perhaps exactly what the author intended, and he is to be congratulated for making his case so trenchantly.

Conventional scientists and physicians will rail at what they see as "pseudo-science" that rejects the obvious truth: that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the sole etiologic agent causing Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Public health workers (including many in "non-health-professional" advocacy groups) will accuse Root-Bernstein of muddying the waters and distracting energies and resources away from "risk-reduction" strategies. Activists opposed to establishment opinion on HIV, who wish to substitute the Gospel According to Duesberg for HIV scientific orthodoxy, will feel they have gotten only half a loaf and no fishes from Root-Bernstein's moderate conclusions. (Peter Duesberg is the University of California molecular biologist who has been lionized and demonized for his vigorous assertion that HIV is not the cause of AIDS.)

Rethinking AIDS: The Tragic Cost of Premature Consensus, by Robert Root-Bernstein (Free Press, 464 pp., $24.95)

Those not steeped in biotechnology will find much of the book's scientific jargon regarding virology and immunology hard going. And people with AIDS or HIV infection may despair that the slender threads of hope that currently make up our treatment for AIDS and its associated infections might prove to be false leads; some of them may be diverted to the even falser promises of quackery.

Like nothing else in our time, AIDS draws forth the ancient primitive need to find malevolent intent where there is human misfortune: to divide the world neatly into us and them, to blame the victims, to discover victimizers, to heap scorn on every perspective that is not one's own, to assert that every different way of approaching the epidemic is not only wrong but evil. As if the horrors of the disease itself were not enough, the conflicts and the charges and counter-charges that surround AIDS, and the hypocrisy of political correctness that stifles honest debate concerning public policy, create, with this epidemic, a public-health version of Bosnia.

Root-Bernstein, a physiologist at Michigan State University, argues for two major premises: 1) there is not adequate scientific proof that HIV is the sole, or even the major, cause of AIDS, and 2) scientific orthodoxy has prematurely closed the door on the question, with potentially disastrous consequences. He is more charitable than some others who espouse this position, in not banging a drum with accusations of lying, cheating, profiteering, face-saving, and bullying by scientific vested interests, but the implications that he wishes to draw are clear

Dr. Joseph was commissioner of health of New York City from 1986 to 1990. His book, Dragon within the Gates: The Once and Future AIDS Epidemic, *was published by Carroll and Graf in 1992.*

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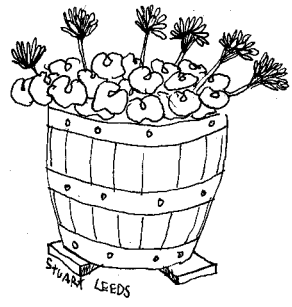
enough, and in this sordid age we live in they are not easily dismissed.

Carefully, with a wealth of citation and technical detail, Root-Bernstein marshalls his argument. His tone is one of restraint, of proper scientific exposition, but one can sense the level of frustration.

In his penultimate chapter, "Alternative Hypotheses for Explaining AIDS," Root-Bernstein lays out four alternative theories that might explain AIDS, each based upon the importance to HIV infection of *pre-existing* immune deficiencies, and each rejecting HIV as "the cause" of AIDS. Then he says, "The most important point that must be made concerning these alternative explanations of AIDS is that we are still ignorant of the causes of this disease. As shocking as the admission of this ignorance may be, it is by far better than pretending to know more than we do."

I believe that Root-Bernstein is wrong. I believe that it is HIV that "causes" AIDS, and that he overlooks two important points. First, all health and all disease exist in a social and environmental context, not just a biological one. The microbe does not act alone. The well-dressed and well-fed rich man steps out of the opera and passes by the malnourished, alcoholic derelict huddled in the doorway. Both are carrying pneumococci in their upper respiratory tree; only one of them (and which one is no mystery) will be dead of lobar pneumonia in the morning. The Third World subsistence farmer and the First World roast-beef eater have very different risks of heart attacks (or of dental decay, for that matter). And so it must surely be with AIDS, whether we dignify the associated elements with the words "co-factors" or not. The microbe does not act alone. One's risk depends not only upon what one does, whom one does it with, and where on the globe one does it, but also upon a large number of predisposing, risk-enhancing, result-determining factors.



Second, there are a limited number of "final common pathways" through which disease is expressed. The similarity of symptoms "caused" by quite distinctly different agents is not unusual. We recognize this when we lump together as "the common cold" illnesses "caused" by any one of a hundred or more different viruses, but following a similar clinical pattern. The occurrence of pneumocystis pneumonia in association with immune deficiency, though much rarer before the AIDS epidemic, is not specific to it. It is not even restricted to patients who have been on chemotherapy for cancer or who have received a transplanted organ. I saw two cases in infants as an intern in 1963, before the era of transplantation, and before the age of AIDS.

So I believe that Root-Bernstein is at least off center in his argument. But belief and certainty are two differ-

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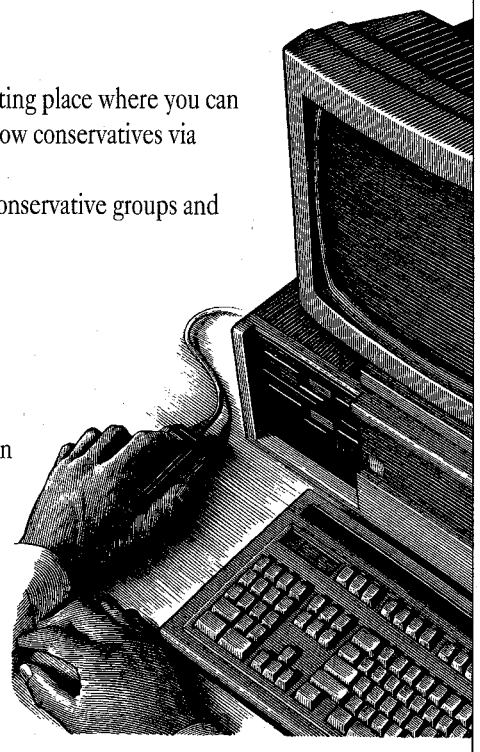

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ent things. And we have been surprised enough by the unexpected twists and turns of this pandemic to learn, if we have learned anything, a sense of humility about our knowledge and our wisdom.

Many unanswered questions remain; many of the puzzle's pieces do not fit together smoothly or even at all. Root-Bernstein is right: let's have a broadly based commission look at all the data regarding "causality" of AIDS. Let's grind the data as fine as our mills can, and as dispassionately and objectively as possible.

That will cost only a few million dollars and a year's time, and we should not slow down one iota on the current course of research, prevention, and treatment while we are doing it. It will, however, be time and money well spent.

I believe that the result will be that HIV will be shown to be the "cause" of AIDS, as much as any single thing is the "cause" of anything else. Perhaps I am wrong, and will be surprised. In any case, as Root-Bernstein says, it will be far better to know that than not to know it.

Will such an inquiry, even if superbly done, end the debate and still the occasional articulate dissident? No, of course not. But it will get us a bit closer to the consensus we really need in order to grapple with this cataclysm, a consensus that to date has eluded us. And it will help us in another way as well. AIDS, for all its tragedy, also offers through research a moonshot of longer-range promise. What we learn at this frontier of immunology and virology will set the agenda for the biomedical advances of the next century. Every scrap of improved and sharper knowledge we can gain will pay dividends in ways yet unthought of. Root-Bernstein is right: there is a "tragic cost to premature consensus." □

Fifty-Fifty

FLORENCE KING

AS AMERICA entered the 1950s, the air was full of debates about the New World Order, except that it was called "the American Century." The phrase was coined by Henry Luce, who believed it was America's duty and destiny to spread democracy around the globe.

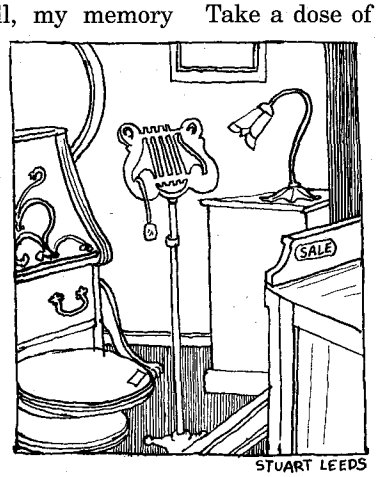
The Fifties, by David Halberstam (Villard, 800 pp., $27.50)

Opposing him was Senator Robert A. Taft, the presidential choice of conservative Republicans and isolationists. Taft warned: "We would be in the same position of suppressing rebellions by force in which the British found themselves during the nineteenth century."

That is precisely what we started doing in the Fifties, thanks to a contradiction in the isolationist mindset that David Halberstam points out in the opening chapters of this richly enjoyable survey of the decade.

The Republican Right, he says, was isolationist when it came to the Atlantic, regarding it as the British ocean, the international ocean. But the Pacific was "the Republican ocean," obliquely associated with missionaries and docile, smiling Asians; a gin-and-tonic, white-linen-suit sort of world full of dreamy subcontinents, like the one that Senator Wherry of Nebraska called "Indigo China."

If I had total recall, my memory would consist of the contents of this book. I started the decade as a girl of 14 listening to the radio bulletin about the invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops, and ended it as a woman of 24 reading about the poisoned silver dollar carried, but not used, by U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers when he was shot down and captured by the Soviets in 1960.



Halberstam uses the same landmarks, filling in the middle with a host of engaging memory prompters. His sources are secondary and derivative, but his instinct for the revealing anecdote, his ear for the memorable quote, and his awesome powers of organization add up to a variegated overview that moves seamlessly between the serious shenanigans of Chief Justice Earl Warren and the frivolous ones of *Peyton Place* author Grace Metalious.

He makes Adlai Stevenson look much better—like a New Democrat, in fact, or an earlier version of Sam Nunn. "The most conservative Democrat to run for President since John W. Davis," according to Arthur Schlesinger Jr. The media loved him nonetheless. Adlai, said Eric Sevareid in one of his trademark rolling parallelisms, "has excited the passions of the mind; he has not excited the emotions of the great bulk of half-informed voters, as had Eisenhower, who, like them, was empty of ideas or certitude."

Mordant radio wit Fred Allen called television "a device that permits people who haven't anything to do to watch people who can't do anything." The first campaign ad was aired by Ike, who said: "Yes, my Mamie gets after me about the high cost of living. It's another reason why I say it's time for a change. Time to get back to an honest dollar and an honest dollar's work."

When some purists objected to this "15-second spot," ad man Rosser Reeves countered that "Never have so many owed so much to so few" was also a 15-second spot. So was Marya Mannes's parody: "Eisenhower hits the spot;/One full General, that's a lot./Feeling sluggish, feeling sick?/Take a dose of Ike and Dick."

Halberstam traces the decline of the Detroit auto industry from 1948, when GM president Charles Wilson signed the first union agreement guaranteeing cost-of-living raises. "In effect it made the union a junior partner of the corporation, [and] reflected the absolute confidence of a bedrock conservative who saw the economic pie so large that he wanted to forgo his ideological instincts in order to start carving it up as quickly as possible."

Forced to pass along huge labor costs to consumers, Detroit depended

Miss King is the author of With Charity Toward None *and other books.*

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on "planned obsolescence," annual model changes calculated to make people ashamed of "old" cars and eager to prove their status by buying a new one every year.

The 1956 VW bug ($1,280) got a rave review in *Popular Mechanics* and "inspired" GM's disastrous rear-engine Corvair, which *Car and Driver* called "one of the nastiest-handling cars ever built." (Its tires required different pressures front and back, something few Americans outside of racing buffs understood.)

The "Model T" of housing was Levittown. The first Levitt houses sold for $7,990, with no down payment, no closing costs, no secret extras, just a $100 deposit, which was returned. "It was an unusual concept: The price was the price," Halberstam notes admiringly. Levitt built 36 houses a day. So what if they didn't have basements? The ancient Romans didn't build basements, said Bill Levitt, and who was he to challenge the ancient Romans?

Levitt houses proved unusually sturdy, but the builder was savaged by culture snobs like John Keats (*The Crack in the Picture Window*) and Lewis Mumford, who theorized that since the houses looked alike, the people inside them must be "made from a cookie cutter." Mumford's coinage quickly spread through the redoubts of bohemianism. I remember sitting on the floor deploring conformity with a bevy of tormented intellectuals, all of us wearing black turtleneck sweaters and talking about cookie cutters.

Conformity was so popular that it was defended even by rugged individualists and eccentric risk takers who honestly believed that they were just like everybody else. Halberstam rounds up a number of these for his most effective demonstration of the Zeitgeist.

Ray Kroc, organizer of the McDonald's franchise empire, combed the land for entrepreneurs without sharp edges. "We cannot trust nonconformists," he declared. "We will make conformists out of them in a hurry. . . . You cannot give them an inch. The organization cannot trust the individual; the individual must trust the organization or he shouldn't go into this kind of business."

Holiday Inns founder Kemmons Wilson modeled his hostels on his own tastes, explaining, "I like to think that I'm so damn normal that anything I like, everybody else is going to like too. The idea that my instincts are out of line just doesn't occur to me."

Hugh Hefner, driven by a belief in his own ordinariness, did not doubt that what stirred his sexual fantasies stirred every other man's. It was not pretentiousness but pride in conformity that dictated his innocent use of the royal pronoun in his first statement of the Playboy philosophy: "We like our apartment. We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an hors d'oeuvre or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph, and inviting in a female for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex."

As the decade wore on, "alienation books" became a genre in themselves. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, a novel by Sloan Wilson, entered the language from the moment it was published in 1955. Plaid flannel shirts, on

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the other hand, were the trademark of Columbia sociology professor C. Wright Mills, the intellectual as lumberjack, whose books, *White Collar* and *The Power Elite*, condemned the new middle class for being affluent without purpose.

David Riesman and Nathan Glazer's *The Lonely Crowd* recast individualists and conformists as "inner-directed" and "other-directed," inspiring numerous parlor games, as well as seduction lines. (Gaze deeply into a girl's eyes and say, "You're inner-directed, I can tell.")

A feud soon erupted in the alienation industry when Riesman criticized Mills for "transferring his own need for intellectual stimulation into the minds and aspirations of people whose needs might be considerably different." Halberstam agrees; Mills, he writes, "did not understand the pride of people who had always been blue collar but who had finally moved up to the white-collar world."

The Fifties had more than one kind of alienation to deal with. Pondering the impending school-desegregation decision, *Brown* v. *Topeka Board of Education*, Chief Justice Fred Vinson said in 1952, "We face the complete abolition of the public school system." The following year he died of a heart attack and Ike replaced him with Earl Warren, "a big, dumb Swede" in the opinion of Judge Learned Hand.

Profiling Warren in 1947, John Gunther produced an assessment that is terrifying in its casual celebration of mediocrity: "honest, likable, and clean; he will never set the world on fire or even make it smoke; he has the limitations of all Americans of his type with little intellectual background, little genuine depth, or coherent political philosophy; a man who has probably never bothered with abstract thought twice in his life; a kindly man with the best of social instincts, stable, and well balanced."

Warren wanted the decision to be unanimous. "He shrewdly framed the Court's internal dialogue so that anyone who did not go along with him seemed a racist." Kentuckian Stanley Reed was an outright segregationist; Robert Jackson thought the NAACP briefs were sociology, not law, but gradually accepted the need, as he put it, to "make a judicial decision out of a political conclusion." Then he too had a heart attack, though he lived to write the concurring opinion that Warren squeezed out of him.

That left only Reed to be persuaded. He finally caved under pressure from Warren at daily lunches, insisting only that integration be allowed to take place gradually.

Halberstam organizes his section on the civil-rights movement around the story of John Daniel Rust's invention of the mechanical cotton picker, which made Southern blacks expendable. His detailed description of the machine and its many problems (how to keep the cotton from tangling in the machine's teeth and getting stuck) is one of many examples of this author's ability to make interesting what ought to be boring.

Especially enjoyable are his thumbnail biographies, including Elvis, James Dean, Tennessee Williams; Charles Van Doren, the boy-next-door star of the quiz-show scandals, who was chosen, said a CBS psychologist, to convince Americans that "We're all pretty much alike and we're all smart"; and my favorite, Grace Metalious, whom Halberstam recasts as Ur-feminist, wryly pointing out that the women of *Peyton Place* were as discontented as it was possible to be.

The book has only a few faults. Halberstam identifies Whittaker Chambers as "an admitted homosexual," ignoring the very loving marriage he made after his youthful confusion.

He also overlooks the begged question in his account of the Kinsey report's statistics on male homosexuality. Since Kinsey did the bulk of his research during World War II when the cream of American manhood was fighting overseas, could this be where the erroneous "10 per cent" came from?

One of his thumbnail biographies falls flat, but it's not his fault. When you see the word "vulnerable" all over the page, you know you're reading about Marilyn Monroe. There is simply nothing left to be said about her, so he shouldn't have bothered.

The only example of outright intellectual carelessness I found concerns my hero, Robert Taft. "Economic conservative he might have been, but he had always been a good man on civil liberties," says Halberstam, falling into the either–or of property rights versus human rights. They are the same, as our unsung Founding Father, Fisher Ames, demonstrated when he wrote: "By securing property, life and liberty can scarcely fail of being secured: where property is safe by rules and principles, there is liberty, for the objects and motives of tyranny are removed." In other words, if you can't seize property, why bother?

Other than that, Halberstam has written what is certain to be the most educational fun read of the year. My favorite of his many riveting images is that of Senator Joseph McCarthy eating a stick of butter to help him hold his liquor.

As for his best sentence, try this description of Margaret Sanger: "She was an American samurai, and she had spent her life on a wartime footing." □

Operation Shylock

HERB GREER

JUST after the Second World War Hannah Arendt wrote: "The theatrical quality of the political world had become so patent that the theater could appear as the realm of reality." She was referring to the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, but

Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy, by John Gross (Simon & Schuster, 386 pp., $25)

John Gross's very interesting book is proof positive that the condition has not gone away. If anything, it has intensified. The bulk of this volume depends for its effect on an amazing and stubborn confusion in which a theatrical character invades real life.

Shylock purports to be the history of "a legend and its legacy." Certainly Shylock himself did not begin as a legend. He was a clear-cut central character in Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice*. As Gross himself says near the end of his book, this *dramatis persona* is a villain who attempts to commit legalized murder.

Mr. Greer writes often about theater for NR.

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The "legendary" connection arose from the fact that Shylock is also a Jew. Because he is a very unpleasant Jew (though not as nasty as some other theatrical Jews of the period, such as Marlowe's Barabbas), and because strong characters in the best plays almost always have a touch of the archetype about them, Shylock broaches the complex of sentiments aroused by anti-Semitism and has, in that context, developed into a kind of legend. What Gross has done is to chronicle a strand of that transformation.

It is an odd and bumpy story, with a number of peculiar problems. The most obvious of these is the confusion described by Hannah Arendt, which sometimes affects Gross himself, when he treats Shylock as though he were not a fiction. One wonders at the sanity of those who have written serious "legal studies" of the trial in the play. The tendency to regard Shylock as an actual person of influence in the real world seems (according to Gross) to have begun with Shakespeare himself. The famous "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech is presented as a turning point in the history of the stereotypically malevolent Jew, moving toward the Jew as a human being.

Speaking as a dramatist, I doubt that the speech had any such purpose. Quite the contrary. Shakespeare did not live in a time like ours, when serious writers for the theater are expected to provide both text and, so to speak, a pedagogic or agitprop gloss. There is a perfectly good dramatic explanation for the "Hath not" speech which Gross never considers. Shylock, a social and religious outsider, and hostile to his society, suddenly advances a number of physical and emotional characteristics that he has in common with his gentile audience. Few if any Elizabethan spectators would have felt such a kinship, and none of them were encumbered with our guilt feelings about spurning minority groups. The effect of the speech would thus very likely have been a neat theatrical *frisson* of rejection and horror, evoked for its own sake, out of sheer dramatic, as opposed to humanitarian, instinct. This may not jibe with the critical image of Shakespeare as the great-hearted poet; but it is less grotesque than the perverse interpretations of subsequent centuries which blatantly confuse the stage with documentary real life, and project anachronistic motives, ideas, and feelings into Shakespeare's mind. What the speech certainly seems to have done is give later generations a fulcrum for turning the play on its head.

In Gross's account, these attempts begin around 1709, when a critic, Nicholas Rowe, founded the tradition of speculating over Shylock as a tragic figure instead of a villain. This idea was first taken onto the stage by the eighteenth-century actor Charles Macklin. In 1790 a clergyman, Richard Hole, wrote "An Apology for Shylock," giving persecution and suffering as an excuse for his bad behavior. In 1814 the actor Edmund Kean discarded Shylock's traditional comic red wig and made him dark, dignified, and tragic. Three years later the critic Hazlitt noted the increasing tendency for Shylock to be portrayed sympathetically, and suggested that he had "more ideas than any other person in

Consensus. Not!

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the piece." At the same time Hazlitt denigrated Portia and sneered at the "quality of mercy" speech, saying that there were "a thousand finer ones in Shakespeare."

By 1838 Shakespeare's play had been tipped completely upside down by liberal critics, with Shylock as a tragic hero and Antonio as a "persecutor." From then on theatrical presentations of Shylock seesawed back and forth between Shakespeare's villain and the critics' heroic victim. Occasionally an eccentric opinion would turn up, as when William Cullen Bryant asserted that "Shylock is not a Jew."

Now and then a gleam of common sense broke through this murk. While Sir Henry Irving was playing a nobly suffering Shylock, the critic James Spedding remarked that Shakespeare, if he had wanted "to inculcate a more tolerant attitude toward the Hebrew race," would not have "selected for his hero a rich Jewish merchant plotting the murder of a Christian rival by means of a fraudulent contract." Shaw remarked of Irving's performance that "there was no question of a good Shylock or a bad Shylock; he was simply not Shylock at all."

There are a few curious sidelights in Gross's history. Karen Blixen, discussing Shylock with a black African, was bemused when the man regretted that Shylock had given up too easily. While agreeing that the bond allows him to shed no blood, the African pointed out that a red-hot knife does not draw blood and that, in order to ensure a precise pound, the flesh could be sliced off in little bits at a time.

Some sort of climax is achieved with the anachronistic assertion of Yiddish writer Schlomo Bickel that Shylock is "putting forward in our name such a justified and fundamental grievance and complaint that it must not be left unsaid"—at which point one begins to tear at one's hair and shout, "Wait! This is a character in a play written as a comedy, centuries ago! What are you *talking* about?" The legendary Shylock, maybe. But not the one in *The Merchant of Venice*.

One wonders what to think of writers and directors and actors (Gross chronicles plenty of them) who insist that because some wacko interpretation of the play is possible—i.e., mooting a homosexual affair between Antonio and Bassanio, with Shylock as a "malevolent mother"—it must have been somewhere in Shakespeare's mind because he was "great." This is like saying that an interpretation of Bach in the manner of Jacques Loussier must have been in Bach's mind because he was a great musician.

Though some of Gross's later chapters become tedious—he is determined to give us the *gontzeh megillah* on modern performances of Shylock, and not many of them are interesting—this book is a rich and amusing account of how the critical and/or theatrical imagination can run wild. Maybe unintentionally, it also throws a startling and brilliant spotlight on how drama in the Western world has been perverted by the (early-nineteenth-century and still festering) conviction of its artists that they are moral arbiters in a benighted world. Read it and laugh. □

FILM

The Fatal Charm of Television

JOHN SIMON

THE interest of a terrible movie such as ***Sliver*** lies in what it tells us about the vagaries of Hollywood. A poor picture, it is a prodigious paradigm. First, it is based on a novel by Ira Levin, of which little more than the title and the basic idea are retained. If you are going to spend money on this property, it might make sense to stick closer to the text by the author of *Rosemary's Baby* and other hits of page, stage, and screen.

Second, the film marks the re-emergence of Robert Evans, the once very successful producer who, for years, has been a forgotten man. You would assume that Evans, still no bleary-eyed dotard, would think twice before muffing his second, possibly last, chance. Instead, he settles for a screenplay by Joe Eszterhas, who has had both ups and spectacular downs, but commands a huge fee because his last, *Basic Instinct*, was a huge commercial hit. But that was directed by the expert Paul Verhoeven and was, compared to this lunatic fantasy about megavoyeurism, as restrained as Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, in which a temporarily immobilized hero saw a nasty thing or two in an apartment across the way.

What could have been in Eszterhas's mind? Let's recycle Sharon Stone, who was so sexy in *Basic Instinct*. Yes, but there she had only to play a spoiled rich nymphomaniac with murder as a possible sideline. Here we have to swallow her as a responsible editor at a serious publishing house, who keeps her nose clean even though she commands an unlikely enough salary to rent a spectacular apartment in a luxury highrise. Miss Stone, who, even dressed down and acting demure, could edit nothing more than a girlie magazine, is a working stiff who gets the very apartment from which another stunning blonde, her (in more ways than one) dead ringer, hurtled twenty floors to her mysterious death.

The building abounds in strange tenants who tend to come to sticky ends. Several of them seem to be remnants of Levin's novel, ineptly tossed into a different plot or pot, where they make as much sense as old wine in new bottles. The feeble suspense boils down to which of the two men courting Carly, our heroine, killed her predecessor and may also do her in. There is Jack, the burnt-out crime novelist, who, though played by the manly Tom Berenger, behaves like a nastily unruly child. And there is Zeke, the unacknowledged owner of the building, who has secretly wired every last room of it to his closed-circuit TV console with scores of screens (a six-million-dollar gadget he picked up in Osaka), and who, played by the popinjayish William Baldwin, sits there endlessly watching the mostly sexual games in which pad after pad proliferates. To this terminal voyeur, Carly says ingenuously, "Zeke, I want to have a real relationship."

There are other choice bits of dialogue. Carly has a flighty, sex-starved colleague (Colleen Camp) who smirkingly remarks that Carly's face has that multiple-orgasm look, and wants to know how she spent the night. "You spend too much time with your vibra-

Mr. Simon is NR*'s film critic.*

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tor," Carly replies with justifiable indignation, for she, as a lengthy bathroom scene reveals, is a bare-knuckles masturbator. "I certainly do," answers her friend. "I'm getting plastic yeast infection." What gives the film—intended as soft-core pornography, but from which some fifty cuts have excised the dubious *raison d'être*—its curiosity value is the way the director, Philip Noyce, a fellow from Down Under (though never before so far down), contrives to make up for the lost explicit sex. He has the cast, and particularly Miss Stone, wander about with glazed, befogged eyes, and talk in husky, throat-bound voices, as if multiple orgasm were imminent, even though they may merely be evaluating a literary manuscript or jointly jogging in Central Park.

It makes, by the way, scant difference which of Carly's swains is the defenestrator, since both are unappetizing enough, though each, at different times, is made to seem a pillar of society—not to be confused, however, with the pillar against which one of the more daringly sexual scenes is enacted. The other big scene is a variation on one in *Basic Instinct*, where Miss Stone vamped a group of policemen questioning her by sitting in such a way as to make it obvious to them and the movie audience that she was wearing no panties. Here Baldwin, who looks like a somnolent pangolin, takes her to a posh restaurant "for some truffles," and makes her remove both bra and panties during dinner. The spectacle could remove the dinner from the strongest stomachs in a decent establishment. But nowhere is there a sign of a single truffle; all the hounds and pigs must have been busy making movies.

■ ***Life with Mikey*** is a nice idea for a film, and has been so before now. Talent agencies make good backgrounds: they allow for a passing parade of talentless postulants to liven up the interstices of the plot with their comic-pathetic auditions. In this film, written by Marc Lawrence and directed by James Lapine, the no-talents are children, making even more uninhibited asses of themselves than grownups could.

I shall not take a high moral stance on whether those poor kids were chosen for their lack of talent and then crassly urged to give their unstinting all. At least they are on the big screen, being remunerated for their aggressive ineptitude, and providing the rest of us with laughter. It's a callous world, and these kids may learn truer lessons from a week on the set than from months at one of our typical secondary schools.

Michael Chapman, a lazy hasbeen, is running a children's talent agency with Ed, his sedulous brother, who grumblingly contributes the hard work. Even so, Chapman & Chapman are headed down the tubes unless they can find a darling young actress to become the TV spokesyoungster for a prestigious cookie company. Michael has one asset: he was once the child star of a wildly popular TV show, *Life with Mikey*, and still basks in the adulation of those who recognize him and slobber over him. But good slobberers are getting hard to find.

Even harder to find is that spokeskid for Corcoran's Cookies. Until, that is, Michael has his wallet lifted by an angelic-demonic Hispanic street urchin, Angie Vega, an 11-year-old with a bagful of stolen wallets and another bagful of cute tricks, who, though tough and streetwise, is neat and needful of love underneath. We've had the untidy, unsettled adult and the rough-hewn but wise street urchin before, at least since Charlie Chaplin tramped and Jackie Coogan urched. But the couple was usually all-male, and there was not before an undertone of flirtatiousness between man and girlchild. Indeed, Michael has no girlfriend, and merely tries to seduce a homely young actress with whom he reads a Chekhov play. Needless to say, Angie puts a stop to that nonsense. There could be a troubling subtext here if one looked closely, something the movie stoutly discourages.

The plot, then, is a lost cause, including as it does Angie's delinquent dad, now in a rehab center and raring to have another go at bringing the girl up with proper care—a father whom Michael finds in the nick of time before things get too sticky between him and Angie. He has coaxed her back into school, but, through a plot contrivance, must house her in his own messy and cramped quarters, which she promptly proceeds to make cozily habitable. Meanwhile, Corcoran, the millionaire cookie manufacturer, takes a shine to Angie, for whom Michael finagles an interview. How could a crusty old Anglo resist a drolly outspoken, dark-hued gutter flower? As lovely and impeccably groomed WASP girls bite the dust, Angie is about to be chosen—but the course of spokesgirlship never did run smooth.

While the plot creaks along preciously and predictably, there is fun to be had from the incidentals. Michael is played with rueful post–*Leave It to Beaver* nostalgia by Michael J. Fox, and Angie by Christina Vidal, unimpressive at first, but slowly growing on you. The true winners, though, are the wisecracking brother, played by the delectable Nathan Lane with his customary roly-poly charm; Cyndi Lauper—believe it or not—as the inefficient but warm-hearted secretary; Victor Garber as the successful but soulless agent Brian Spiro (an apt name); David Krumholz as the odious boy actor Barry Corman, Chapman & Chapman's sole moneymaker and tyrant; and several others, many of them Broadway notables in cameo roles, among whom Christine Baranski shines most brightly.

James Lapine, who made a mess of his first movie, *Impromptu* (written by his wife), does much better here, showing nice cinematic feeling despite his theatrical provenance. He sensibly hired some first-class theater talent for his movie: Adrianne Lobel as production designer, William Ivey Long as costume designer, and Alan Menken (originally from the New York stage, but more recently from Disney musical cartoons) as the composer. With hair-trigger editing by Robert Leighton, the film moves ahead jauntily, scattering one-liners and sight gags along its merry way. When not forced to deviate into sentimentality, *Mikey* has plenty of spiky élan. □

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Class Conflict

ARLENE STERLING

THOUGH THERE are other film schools around, the Los Angeles landscape is dominated by the USC Film School and its cross-town rival, the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television. Together, these schools have produced a disproportionate number of the world's most popular directors, writers, and producers. *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*, *Indiana Jones*, *Lethal Weapon*, *E.T.*, and *Rain Man* are just a few of the films that bear the UCLA/USC stamp.

Since the fame of both schools rests primarily on the huge popularity of such films, you'd expect their students to show at least a healthy respect, if not a profound affection, for popular movies and the audiences that love them. In fact, as I've found as a student at one of these schools, my classmates—the makers of the next *E.T.* or *Star Wars* or *Ghostbusters*—feel a mixture of contempt and embarrassment for the people who go to such movies—at least until graduation.

In fact, around here the term "moviegoer" is never used. When talking about the crowds that plunk down $7.50 to see the latest Bill Murray movie, film students refer to "the masses," "the unwashed masses," or "the people stupid enough to pay money for that c---." Those moviegoers unlucky enough to live outside of New York or Los Angeles are known as "hicks," "hayseeds," "Okies in a darkened room," or the generic catch-all "idiots."

The problem, as viewed from USC and UCLA, is that the unwashed masses simply have no taste. They don't like low-budget independent features such as *The Crying Game* or *Strictly Ballroom*. The movie elements they do like—heroes, happy endings, a good story—are crude and cretinous. In one USC writing class, a student was forced to defend a happy ending. It was a romantic comedy in which a troubled couple gets back together at the end. Her fellow writers felt this was "a cheap shot," "a cop-out," "the easy way," and, of course, "crass."

"Crass" is the all-purpose rebuke for anything that smacks of "Hollywood." A happy ending is the perfect example. One classmate of mine began writing a conventional action-comedy story after finishing one about a black lesbian woman who is persecuted by her racist boss and beaten by her white husband. (At the end of that story, the lesbian kills herself and her children.)

In class, the action comedy was assailed as "crass." "I just hate to see you doing this crass Hollywood c---," said one student. Another added, "Your previous script was so courageous. Now it's like you've been co-opted."

"Courageous" is the standard term used to defend anything depressing, nihilistic, and bleak. In an industry in which calling somebody a "Republican" constitutes a vicious personal smear, "courageous" is also used to praise any story that promotes a liberal political cause. For example, a story about two oppressed housewives finding independence through lesbianism would be "courageous."

Often found with "courageous" is "timely." Any script involving gays, lesbians, abortion, minorities, or the evils of Western civilization would be praised as "timely," as well as courageous. Also popular is "ambiguous," used to praise material that makes no sense.

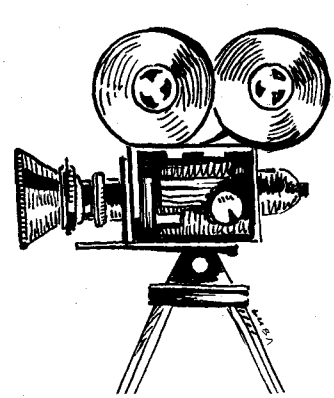
One area where ambiguity is not welcome, however, is in anything relating to religion. As if cosmically linked, every film-school script I've seen dealing with religion condemns the church as one of mankind's greatest evils. While popular pro-religion movies such as *Sister Act* are routinely dismissed as "low-brow" and "reactionary," film students write script after script about characters who grow by losing their faith, or about despotic, corrupt priests and pastors.

During a class script reading, a student read a scene that he had written between a priest and a female environmental activist. In the scene, the priest attempts to show the activist the beauty of his church and his religion.

After the scene was read aloud, another student immediately said, "I've got a real problem with this religious element. Being anti-religious myself, I just shut down when I start seeing crosses and cassocks. My first instinct is, some slope-browed Jesus freak is trying to convert me, which I hate."

The red-faced writer anxiously defended the scene on the grounds that it was being taken out of context. "I'm passionately anti-church," he said. "In the end of the story, the priest realizes the evils of organized religion and gains the courage to break free of it. The activist shows him her religion, which is all about people and nature, not God. Please don't think I'm *for* God." The writer then presented a later scene in which the priest rips off his clerical collar and has sex with the activist on the altar of his church. This was greeted with enthusiastic praise.

The large contingent of foreign students echo these sentiments in their own fashion. English and French students particularly enjoy trashing American films and filmmakers. During one class discussion of a European film so bad that even the American film students didn't like it, a paunchy French woman stood up and railed for several minutes against American movies, concluding, "The problem with your cinema is that nobody will take the chance to be an artist. You have no imagination. In France, the cinema values the artist. It is beautiful. You should learn from France."



The woman (like many foreign students) was being paid $2,000 per month by her government to go to school here. Perhaps her countrymen hope she'll return home to reverse a distressing trend: over three-quarters of French box-office receipts go to American films.

Miss Sterling (a pseudonym) is a student at a Los Angeles film school.

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The English, for their part, carry on an odd love affair with older American movies, especially from the Sixties. This love is only matched by their hatred of nearly everything made before and since. While many French students will *never* admit that America has produced anything worthwhile, the English—and the Germans—enjoy lamenting the pathetic, irreversible decline of American cinema and, by extension, of America itself.

Oddly, the only foreign students (and, more often than not, the only students at all) to openly admire American movies and moviemaking are the ones from Central and Eastern Europe. Other students trade knowing smirks and roll their eyes as the guy from Hungary extols the latest Michael J. Fox comedy for its superior wit and sophistication.

Contempt of this kind, for the people who it's hoped will someday buy you that chalet in Aspen, isn't universal; but it is the dominant feeling in film school. You might expect that the PC pretensions of my fellow students will suddenly vanish after graduation. You might also think these anti-Hollywood crusaders would shun a career in "Hollywood." They don't have to.

Happily, graduates not only find that Hollywood offers five- and six-figure writing and directing deals, it also shares their attitudes—if less openly. At both schools, large numbers of studio chiefs, producers, and other power brokers teach and lecture. Recently, the term "cultural elite" has been a focus of discussion. While a few decry the notion as a myth, most embrace it in a grand spirit of *noblesse oblige*. Columbia Pictures Chairman Mark Canton generously put it this way: "I'm not suggesting everything we make should satisfy the cultural elite. We still need a mix of cappuccino films [for the elite] and popcorn movies [for the masses]."

The secret? Hollywood *loves* to be thought of as culturally elite. Sony Pictures Chairman Peter Guber shouted to his UCLA class one day, "Congratulations! You're all members of the cultural elite!"—then stage-whispered, "Just don't let anyone know how much fun it is." He was greeted with warm smiles and appreciative laughter. Film students too love to refer to themselves as members of the "cultural elite," though with just the right hint of mock-embarrassment, self-deprecation, and irony. At USC, a recent party invitation came addressed, "Attention: Members of the Cultural Elite."

As time goes by, however, the irony gets harder to detect. The notion of Hollywood as a community profoundly alienated from ordinary America may have been advanced by conservatives as a criticism, but it is quickly gaining ground in Hollywood itself.

This is a long way from the Hollywood of the moguls who created it. According to the Hollywood historian Neal Gabler, in *An Empire of Their Own*, the early moguls celebrated "an America where fathers were strong, families stable, people attractive, resilient, resourceful, and decent. This was *their* America." Louis B. Mayer (of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the greatest of the old studios) didn't worry about popcorn movies and cappuccino films. "My unchanging policy," he wrote, "is great star, great director, great play, great cast." □

DELECTATIONS

In My Cups

DIGBY ANDERSON

WHO SERVES the more disgusting coffee, the English or the Americans? The English are meaner and lazier, relying heavily on tiny teaspoons of instant coffee. Americans have more machines that use proper coffee but they serve it in plastic—poly something—or cardboard cups. The English mostly drink out of china, but even the middle classes don't bother with saucers, having gone over to mugs. These have absurd slogans such as "MY MUG" or cartoons of furry animals. One can regularly see senior English businessmen or lawyers clutching a half-pint mug proclaiming "OH FOR THE WEEKEND." But at least they don't worry about the health effects of coffee as much as Americans: how on earth gallons of what is essentially light brown water can have any health effect except continual urination is anyone's guess.

The French are better. True, they don't show much interest in *types* of coffee. Some argue they use too much *robusta* and not enough *arabica*. But they drink a lot: a coffee-drinking family of four will consume a couple of pounds a week. More important, they make it strong and with little water. They use proper small china cups with saucers and without slogans.

Coffee is even better in Italy where, since the war, *espresso* has dominated outside the home. Those who know drink *ristretto*, the strongest and smallest. But it should immediately be said that *espresso* machines do not guarantee good coffee. Let an American loose on an *espresso* machine and all he does is keep pulling the handle until he has the half-pint of dishwater he so loves.

So some basic rules for Americans. Forget for a while the rarefied arguments about acidity levels and ideally proportioned blends. Let's sort out a basic regime. Proper people do not

Mr. Anderson is food columnist for The Spectator *(London) and the author of* The Spectator Book of Imperative Cooking.

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drink coffee between meals or when they feel like it. Indeed, proper people do not eat between meals or when they feel like it. Coffee is drunk at meals, off tables and sitting down; two cups at breakfast (by all means have two breakfasts and four cups; the Spanish often do), one double after lunch, two after dinner. The only exception is late afternoon when a cup may be taken without food as a restorative, but it is still taken sitting down. The coffee is served in china cups on saucers, white or dark green and gold. Each cup will have no more than a twentieth of a pint of water. If you are thirsty, drink a glass of water but do not ruin coffee with it.

Make coffee either with an *espresso* machine or with one of those Italian vacuum machines where the water goes in the bottom half and is forced through an intermediate layer of coffee into the top. Filter coffee is for homosexuals, and instant is only fit for those who think television or football more important than making good food and drink. Buy *ground* and vacuum-packed *espresso* coffee. Grind beans yourself only if you have a grinder that grinds very fine. Use the coffee up quickly.

Espresso machines are expensive. They do not last forever and can be irritating in their old age. I nursed my Pavoni for two years while it slowly died. Steam started escaping from more and more places in its own charming version of incontinence. Sometimes it would spit at me just like an elderly person.

There is a new machine on the market which is about half the price of a full Italian *espresso*. It is called a Nespresso because it uses pre-sealed cartridges of Nestlé coffee. Before the steam goes through the coffee the cartridge explodes with a small but exciting "bang." These make very good coffee but you have to keep buying the cartridges. If you don't feel up to a full *espresso* but are resolved to reform your coffee regime, they would make a very good start. Because they heat not the entire water reservoir but only the amount necessary for each cartridge, they work very quickly and you can drink more cups.

But a word of warning. They, like the traditional *espresso*, are only as good as their operator. You must turn the switch back when they have delivered the minuscule amount needed—otherwise you will be back with the traditional American half-pint of dishwater. If you must add more liquid then let it be brandy or grappa. But even that is better used afterward as a way of swilling out the coffee cup. The French have a nice habit with it which would annoy Mrs. Clinton. Drink your coffee, fill the little cup with cognac. Dip a large lump of sugar in it and give it to any small children or babies about. The Frogs call it a "canard." □

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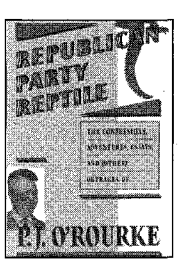

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy, by Houston A. Baker Jr. (Chicago, 128 pp., $16.95)

A RECENT former president of the Modern Language Association has put forth a single "absolute prerequisite" for classroom teaching in the Nineties: rap, which he says is the single best means of communicating with students. One can only hope that Mr. Baker is prepared to take his own advice, given sentences such as this: "Black studies became a sign of conjuncture that not only foregrounded the university as a space of territorial contest, but also metaphorized the contest itself in a way that allowed the sign to serve as a simulacrum." Between street rap and academic gobbledygook, the choice ought to be obvious. Rap at least has the benefit of clarity. Where does this leave plain English? In desperate need of some good old-fashioned de-vocabularizing when it comes to this pretentiously silly defense of black studies *and* rap, against the still-too-white, unrapped academy and its reflexive resort to "moral panic" (whatever that is) whenever black studies happens to be in a "re-territorializing" mode. Then again, perhaps "re-vocabularizing" (another Baker-ism) in the name of greater gobbledygook is necessary if the author is to endorse both Ice-T *and* Andrea Dworkin in the same volume. Ah, the tricky demands of political correctness! Ice-T remains In, but 2 Live Crew is Out. "Re-territorialization" apparently means that it's OK to kill cops, but not to invade the moral high ground occupied by Miss Dworkin. How do I know? It's all there just waiting to be "intertextualized"—er, "metaphorized."

—JOHN C. CHALBERG

Stanford White's New York, by David Garrard Lowe (Doubleday, 339 pp., $45)

JUST TO look at the photos in this biography is to recall a lost civilization—a glorious Atlantis in black and white. Stanford White, of the firm McKim, Mead & White, was the pre-eminent architect of the years preceding the turn of the century, and did more than any other man to transform New York City from Edith Wharton's dowdy brownstone cemetery to a Beaux Arts metropolis full of terra-cotta and marble palaces, including the old Madison Square Garden, the now vanished *Herald* building, and the extinct Fifth Avenue mansions of the Whitney, Pulitzer, and Vanderbilt families. Mr. Lowe, a distinguished architectural historian, has written a breezy yet learned, charming, and wonderfully evocative portrait. The pleasure of the book, though, is spiked by the reader's awareness that most of White's best work has been torn down: the model of the decline of the Ameri-

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can city. The people of Stanford White's era walked around with their eyes wide open, while many of us do so half asleep. That is the only explanation I can think of for the bland indifference that has greeted the destruction of these astonishingly beautiful buildings. Though images of the time come down to us in black and white, it seems that White and his contemporaries were the ones, and not us, who lived in full color. They even died more colorfully back then. White himself ended his career in 1906 atop Madison Square Garden, shot to death by the jealous ex-husband of a young woman with whom he had carried on an affair. —David Klinghoffer

Eight Little Piggies, by Stephen Jay Gould (Norton, 479 pp., $22.95)

Stephen Jay Gould is the most articulate disciple of Charles Darwin writing today, and this is the latest book in a series collecting the Harvard paleontologist's essays from *Natural History* magazine—the title piece being a meditation on nature's preference for five digits on hands and feet throughout the animal kingdom, and a few of the interesting offshoots from earlier eras that were eventually dismissed from the pantheon of natural selection. The best thing about Gould, whether he's discussing snails in the South Pacific or Near Eastern mole rats, is his modesty; he never forgets the limits of his discipline. He does not try to stretch Darwinism to explain the inspiration of Mozart, or reduce the nature of human consciousness to a side effect of evolution. He simply delights in what he and his colleagues have uncovered over their travels, as will readers of this delightfully witty scientist.
—John Farrell

Foreign Policy Failures in China, Cuba, and Nicaragua: A Paradigm, by Ray S. Cline and Roger W. Fontaine (United States Global Strategy Council, 246 pp., $20)

"Paradigm" is a word that deserves a good long rest, but let us acknowledge that Cline and Fontaine have not thrown it around loosely. That is exactly what they found when they examined closely the superficially dissimilar losses of China, Cuba, and Nicaragua as U.S. allies. The three cases had several things in common. One was the State Department dissatisfaction with the other country's government because of corruption, mismanagement, inefficiency, or other shortcomings. Another was fascination with what seemed to be a utopian alternative (Mao Tse-tung, Castro, the Sandinistas). A third common thread was the presence of one or more journalists stationed in the subject country who took it upon themselves to "educate" the folks back home to the sins of the local government and the shining idealism and moral superiority of the insurgents. The authors conclude that "a common American pattern is to criticize the struggling *good* and hope to replace it with an ideal *best* which never, in fact, becomes a reality." The reason may be "that Americans are so fortunate and comparatively wealthy that they do not study international conflicts very carefully." —Peter D. Hannaford

Strange Attractors, by Rebecca Goldstein (Viking, 285 pp., $21)

Rebecca Goldstein's charm as a writer, as she demonstrated in her first novel, *The Mind–Body Problem*, is her ability to capture the academic world, with all its mix of misfits and geniuses, its promiscuity, and the absurdity of the life's work of a few of its professors. In this new collection of stories, one of the heroines is devoted to the study of soap bubbles. But in the rest of the book, Miss Goldstein seems to want to get away from ivy-covered backdrops and, like an ambitious ventriloquist, adopt trickier, more unfamiliar voices: that of an upper-crust New York publisher recalling the days when he made his reputation by daring to print a *Ulysses*-like book; that of an elderly Jewish man describing an old-world rabbi who came to genteel Connecticut. Most of these stories are successful, and are performed with much of the author's usual charm. Miss Goldstein fails only when she attempts a nineteenth-century aristocrat in "From Dreams of the Dangerous Duke." There is cause to be suspicious of writers who want to sound like people from another century: it reeks of the party trick, even when done well, and makes you wonder whether they find their own time insufficiently populated with interesting characters.
—Danielle Crittenden

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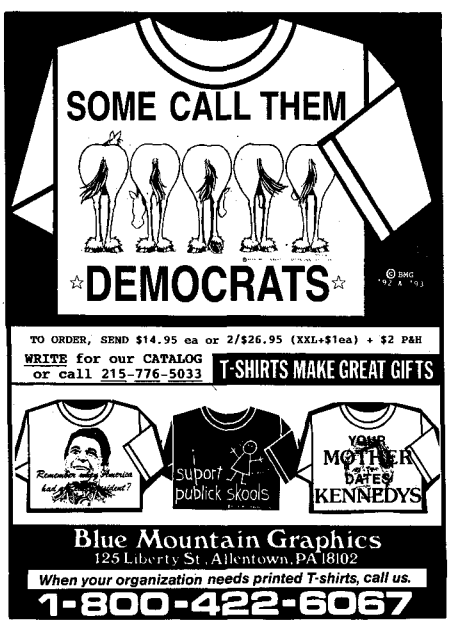
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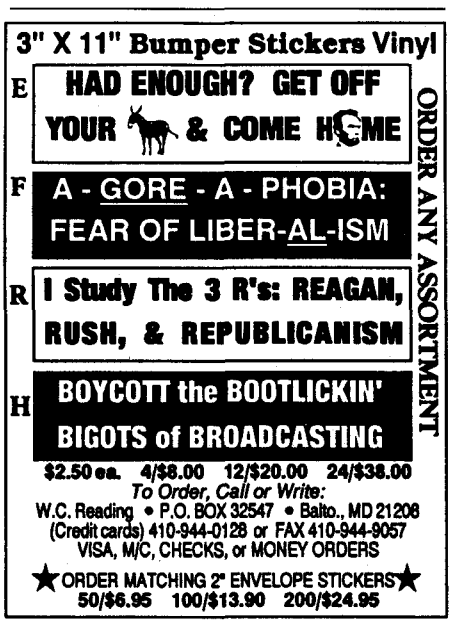
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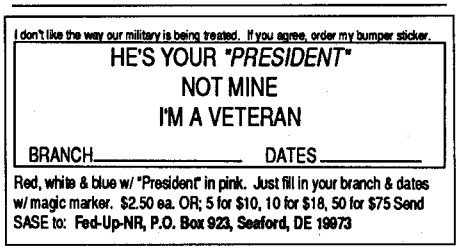
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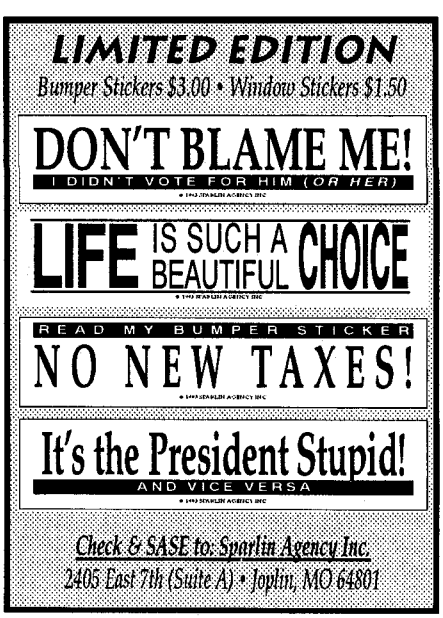
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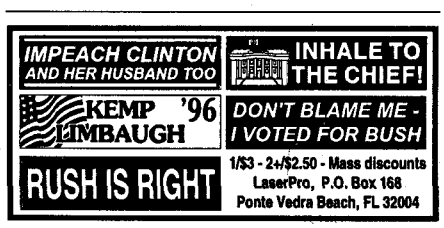
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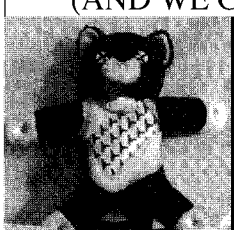

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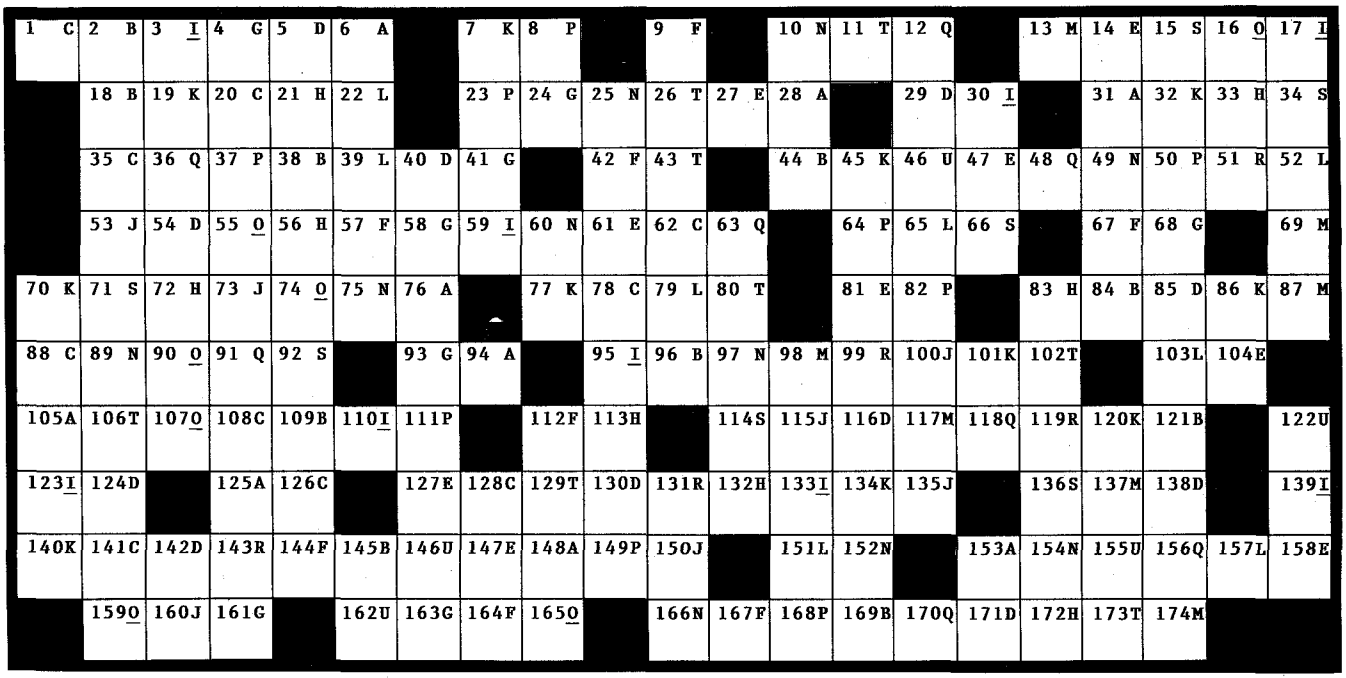
TRANS-O-GRAM / Kem Putney



DEFINITIONS

A. How the sow would tow — 153 148 76 28 94 125 6 105 31

B. Carefully pronounces — 96 169 145 121 44 84 2 38 109 18

C. Dentist's concern (2 words) — 141 78 62 108 1 88 128 35 20 126

D. Sponsorship, politically — 116 54 124 40 142 85 130 171 138 5 29

E. Spin doctor's measurements? — 127 81 147 14 158 61 104 27 47

F. Sheath — 164 167 112 42 67 9 57 144

G. Italian region — 41 163 58 93 4 24 161 68

H. Seventeenth-century Massachusetts governor — 33 113 83 172 72 56 132 21

I. Seer — 3 133 110 139 30 123 59 95 17

J. A *hint*—to the calligrapher — 100 160 73 115 53 150 135

K. One type of alien—and homeless — 134 120 101 70 45 86 7 77 32 140 19

L. Irwin Allen's inferno — 103 151 79 22 39 157 65 52

M. Diaphragm problem — 137 87 117 69 98 13 174

N. Shameless conduct — 166 152 97 49 10 75 60 89 154 25

O. Tots — 74 90 55 159 107 16 165

P. Marginal scrawls — 82 149 111 64 23 50 168 37 8

Q. Term-paper addendum — 156 48 170 118 63 36. 91 12

R. Sacred images — 119 131 143 51 99

S. Takes leave — 66 114 34 71 15 136 92

T. Taking pleasure in — 173 80 129 106 43 26 11 102

U. Illinois city —sounds like a French scam — 162 122 146 155 46

DIRECTIONS

The object of TRANS-O-GRAM is to fill in the puzzle diagram by guessing the words from their definitions, and transferring each letter of the guessed word to the correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. When the diagram is filled in it will spell out a quotation from some published work (reading normally from left to right, black boxes indicating the ends of words); also, when the words have all been filled in above, their initial letters will spell out the author and title of the quoted work. The acrostic feature, and the relative word-lengths in the diagram, will assist in the solution. Spelling and definitions on the authority of *Webster's Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary*, Second Edition.

Solution to Last Issue's Trans-O-Gram. [JOYCE] GABRIEL: *Profitable Crime*: "I think what most of us would like to see are fewer movies about Amy Fisher and more movies about heroes and heroines, people who have done something positive to make them stand out, rather than having committed a crime."

For Vol. II of the puzzle collection, send $5.95 (plus $1 S&H) to: T-Gram Plus, 3279 Lake Powell, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185.

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An Early Starter

NEW YORK, MAY 19

I told my guest I thought his keynote address at the Houston Convention last year a great speech. He replied, "You know, the media *hated* it, just hated it."

Why? Because, said Senator Phil Gramm, who is running for President, his talk was conceived to help George Bush. It was aimed at rednecks ("I am one") and ethnics. It might have worked if it had been delivered by President Bush himself, because it was wholly Bush-oriented. "Besides, there was the problem of the Texas delegation, which was seated directly in front of me." Why was that a problem? "Because every word I uttered got them laughing or applauding. I got the idea the speech was great!" But he learned that he didn't come through as "likable."

He does not smile, non-stop, like Clinton, i.e., from the moment he brushes his teeth in the morning until the moment he brushes his teeth at night—that much is true. But the smile, for its rarity, is the more engaging. Senator Gramm is helped by the lilt of a Texas twang. The cadences are those of John Wayne, with a touch of the self-effacement of Jimmy Stewart. And his opinions, coming through in that folkloric mode, burn deeper in the memory, as if one were to hear a lecture by Lord Keynes speaking with a Southern accent. It isn't the kind of thing one expects from a PhD in economics who was a full professor (Texas A&M) when he went into politics.

What are the chances of beating Mr. Clinton's tax package? Answer: A lot depends on whether Kay Hutchison wins in Texas, especially if she wins big, in which case a very clear signal is sent to Southern Democrats and moderates everywhere. "Of course, a lot of them will continue to do what they have been doing, telling everybody how bad a particular Clinton measure is, then voting for it." The tax bill can't be opposed by a filibuster, because it grew out of the budget bill and is thus shielded from that parliamentary maneuver. But there will be fifty hours of debate over a period of a week, during which measures to modify it will be introduced. "We'll ask them, Do you really want a BTU tax bill? We'll ask them, Do you really want to raise corporate taxes on small business? We'll ask them, Do you really want to discourage marriage by penalizing joint returns?" He smiles: "The paradox is that if the bill is defeated, Clinton might be re-elected. If it is passed, it'll be such a mess he wouldn't stand a chance." Why then does he press for it? "Because he is a zealot. I know. I'm a zealot myself." Phil Gramm is a zealot for small government. He doesn't believe that the problem of a swollen government can be handled simply by counting on more growth in the private sector, causing the government to diminish relatively.

What are the prospects for the North American Free Trade Agreement? Answer: It will be tough sledding—the unions are mobilized against it. But it is a treaty of such historic importance that he thinks Clinton will, in the end, let it go by. "If he doesn't, it's going to be hell, in Canada, and in Mexico especially." A smile. He remembers the pressure put on him to vote against a free-trade bill. He received in the mail 250 candid-camera shots of homes, their owners standing outside. And in handwriting along the borders, such things as, "Do you really want me to be homeless, on account of free trade?"

How did he handle that one? "Waal, ah jus wrote to them an I said, 'Every now and then ah do something for *God*. And if you want a protectionist representing you in Congress, y'all will have to vote for somebody else.'"

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Who else will be running in 1996? Well, Pete Wilson, if he is re-elected as governor of California. John Engler of Michigan has done a hell of a job. Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, and Bill Weld of Massachusetts. And of course Jack Kemp and maybe Bob Dole. But it is not entirely a coincidence that the last three Republican nominations have gone to Texans and Californians. That is where the early money is, and the prospects of huge delegations.

Will the fiscal-conservative/social-moderate formula change emphatically? Senator Gramm says he can't find any way to argue that the unborn child has zero rights, but the adjudication of those rights, against the mother's desires, isn't easy, and probably the most the Republican Party of the future will be able to do is to deny public money for abortion expenses. There has to be a "value component" in the party platform. Just what it ought to be will take a lot of time to figure out.

"An how are *you* doin'?" he wanted to know. Just fine, I said, smiling. □

The Repristination Of Bill Clinton

NEW YORK, MAY 12

The emissions from the Beltway were that President Clinton was going to get out of town for the purpose of revitalizing popular confidence in him. While sitting in the White House with Congress and the Serbs out of his control his public figure was diminishing, so that he needed, like Antaeus, to touch earth again. In the heartland of America, the great idealistic energies that he stimulated during the campaign would revitalize him, like spinach for Popeye.

He was off to a most awful start.

A student in Chicago asked Mr. Clinton how was it that he was so concerned over Bosnia, to the point of talking about U.S. military action in the area, given the record of his opposition to the Vietnam War.

I pause to comment that in the 14 months or so since we discovered who Bill Clinton was, I have not published one animadversion about his Vietnam record. My feeling was that, like so many others, he was carried away by the defiant spirit of the age; and that his misconduct at that time should not disqualify him from service as President, if he was judged qualified for the role.

But his reply in Chicago makes vitally relevant his entire attitude toward Viet-

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nam. Because what he said was that no comparison could be made between the challenge posed in Yugoslavia and the challenge in Vietnam. Why? Because in Bosnia "the world community" was engaged in horror over the aggressive action of the Serbs, whereas in Vietnam, the United States got itself involved in what was really "a civil war."

It would be difficult to compress more historical distortions into a single statement. a) No historian who has worked his way through kindergarten knowledge of Vietnam will say to you today that what we had there was a civil war. To say that is the equivalent of maintaining that the suppression of the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian uprisings in 1956 and 1968 by the Soviet Union constituted anti-fascist acts. The Vietnam War was an act of aggression by the North against the South, and called for twenty thousand North Vietnamese soldiers to come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail every month. If the Vietnam struggle was a civil war, then the boat people can be classified as tourists. And, b) our action in Vietnam was, until it disintegrated, solidly backed by our allies in Asia and in Europe. It was one hundred times the "community" effort now consolidated against the Serbs.

And then later in the day, President Clinton explains to students his plan for the Federal Government to take over the operation of loans to college students. Why? Because to do so would relieve the students of the "excess profits" currently being made by the banks who serve as middlemen.

To say that the fees earned by banks are "excess profits" is sheer anti-capitalist attitudinizing. The planted axiom is that if the government takes over an operation previously handled by the private sector, the operation becomes more efficient and cheaper. In fact, the weight of experience tells us that it is almost an unfailing rule that the absorption of responsibility by government a) adds cost to the transaction, and b) pitches the transaction onto a political rather than an economic plane. President Clinton might as well say that since the government buys a lot of airplanes, tanks, and automobiles, it should produce them in order to avoid excess profits from the middleman.

And—believe it or not—on the very same day, Mr. Clinton plugged for his so-called national-service program. I feel deeply enough about the principle of national service to have written an entire book on the subject. But the national service Mr. Clinton is attracted to is quite simply a commercial exploration: How much money does it take to buy the time of young Americans we need to, e.g., help out in old people's homes? He presumes to vitalize the idealism of young people—by buying their time.

A hell of a day for the President. Alas, one is increasingly convinced that he is organically ignorant of the realities of history, and ignorant of the structure of American idealism. □

Mr. Clinton's Travesty

NEW YORK, MAY 21

For all that Bill Clinton likes to think of himself as the reincarnation of American idealism, he has the capacity to vulgarize much that he touches. Raising taxes becomes an act of justice, Vietnam is what he didn't approve of because it was a civil war, and wherever he is on the matter of Bosnia, which is never where he was the day before, that is the only position occupiable by moral and wise men. In the few measures he has taken with respect to national service, he has managed to materialize the whole idea.

Nicola Clark of the *Wall Street Journal* reminded us of how they handle the problem of cheap labor for social services in Germany. They conscript it, in effect. Those of us who oppose the draft should from time to time remind ourselves that, in the industrial world, we are a small minority. It is only Canada, the United States, Japan, and Great Britain that do not have a military draft. What happened in Germany was that the shrewd Huns came to terms in 1985 with certain market realities, this being their specialty. On the one hand more young men became 18 than the army needed; on the other hand, social institutions, in particular those relating to health needs, were desperate for more help at affordable prices. It used to be that in order to avoid the military draft in Germany you needed to ululate about how force and violence did terrible things to you and therefore you were a conscientious objector. To an extent, one gathers, these motions one still goes through. But it isn't necessary, because the draft board simply winks at you, and says, Okay, conscientious objector, proceed to Social Assignment Center X.

There you are sent to an old people's home, or a hospital, or to school: whatever. There is a slight penalty in that you are detained in service for 15 months, whereas the military conscripts get out after 12 months. But your pay is $8.50 per day (the institution to which you are assigned provides room and board), rising slightly after a few months. The Germans get the labor of 135,000 national servants at a cost of about $3 billion per year. Mr. Clinton anticipates, by the year 1997, having 150,000 Americans engaged in national service: at a cost of $9.5 billion per year. Why the enormous difference?

Because under Mr. Clinton we are preparing in effect to buy the time of the national-service students at enticing commercial rates. We are preparing to pay $20,000 for a year of the "volunteer's" time, teaching little children how to read or carrying the bedpans of the aged or the hospitalized. The list is very nearly endless of things that need to be done—in Germany, one-quarter of the personnel of the Red Cross are the national-service conscientious objectors. In the U.S., these tasks will be done in exchange for paying the student's costs of attending college. It is not very different from the ROTC. It is not widely imagined that the ROTC collects only true American young patriots. It collects some of these, no doubt, but primarily it collects Americans who are willing to barter time in the military for tuition, room, and board.

In a way, it is an okay deal. If the Federal Government is going to go into the business of hiring a year of a young person's life in order to accomplish social purposes, then you have a straight market transaction. You pay as much as you need to pay to get the time of as many people as you wish to hire.

But to call this national service disgraces an ideal. The Peace Corps, the Mormon young missionaries—the spirit there is different. For them the idea is to submit to sacrifice, in exchange for the benefits, not of room and board and tuition, but of life in America. The symbol (as advocated in my recent book on the question) is of the 18-year-old approaching the American altar and saying: Okay. You have given me a Bill of Rights, a Constitution, protection from foreign powers. I will give you one year of my time in exchange.

Graduates of that ceremony re-enter society with a badge of honor, first-class citizens who believe that blessings are not altogether free, that some gesture of requital is in order. That is national service, not just another employment agency festooned with speeches by Bill Clinton about love-of-country. The act should, as currently envisioned, be renamed the Hiring Hall Act of 1993, not to be confused with a point of light. □

(Universal Press Syndicate)

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On Tender Hooks

IF LOVE means never having to say you're sorry, America is on tender hooks. Somebody is always apologizing.

Country-club memberships, baseball "necessities," Confederate flags, water buffalo, Madame Butterfly, boathouses in Kansas (isn't that like "Swiss navy"?), speaking English, being male, roasting people at roasts, belittling the flexed-arm hang, Hiroshima, oil spills, babies without fathers, swimmers without buoyancy, Columbus, You People, Tammy Wynette, and the 1916 song, "Where Did Robinson Crusoe Go with Friday on Saturday Night?"

I threw that last one in just to see if you were paying attention. It hasn't become a *cause célèbre* yet, but only because few people now alive know the words: "Did they dine out with wild mens on cannibal trimmins? / Where there are wild mens there must be wild wimmens." That's a twofer.

The vocabulary of apology grates on the nerves like chalk squeaking across an African-American board. The moment we hear "to any and all" we know an apology is coming, so we bite down hard and wait for "inappropriate," "regrettable," and "perceived," the last being a politically correct hint that white feminists can jump to conclusions. The jaws start to relax at "Let us put it behind us and go forward," a signal that it's over until the next time.

"Never apologize, never explain," said Immanuel Kant. This maxim has so many versions that it qualifies as received truth. From the Frenchman who said, "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*," to John Wayne's signature line in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, "Never apologize, mister, it's a sign of weakness," the wisdom of taking one's knocks, thumbing one's nose, and leaving well enough alone was universally acknowledged.

No more. Now we eat our way down a Baskin-Robbins menu of apologies with something to satisfy every craving. "The buck stops here" is the apology of choice for people in the throes of a calm, firm, manly panic. VMI's contention that single-sex schools "celebrate diversity" is the steadfast cave-in sundae: when you defend yourself with the enemy's language, you are apologizing whether you know it or not. Claiming "humanitarian" reasons for your government's actions avoids the need to apologize for having a national interest. And those who believe that cringing actions speak louder than craven words can savor the gesture-as-apology and voluntarily turn in their guns at community drives.

On it goes. The only way to say what you really think is to talk into an open mike and then apologize for not knowing it was open.

Tender Hooks can be laid at the doors of the nursery and the sewing room. Hurt feelings and apologies have always been special concerns of women and children, who conduct interminable, maniacally detailed hearings on the finer points of emotional affronts the instant someone wails, "Johnny talked mean to me!"

Women consequently have developed a third ear for the subtle tones, trenchant pauses, and vocal syncopation that only a connoisseur of bad vibes can catch. She is peerless, as every man who has had this exchange with a woman can attest:

"But what did I say?"

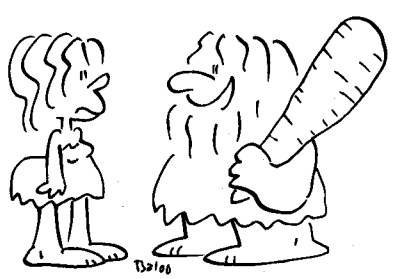
"It was *how* you said it."

WELCOME to the Zeitgeist. America, no longer a man's country, is now rigged for the exquisite sensibilities of women and children—the same people who gave us "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all," and "Take that back or I'll never speak to you again as long as I live!"

Tender Hooks has made crisp, concise language an object of fear and loathing. I don't mean just clumsy vagaries like "native American," but the far more serious trend of using words to mean what we wish them to mean, and banishing outright any word whose definition fails to satisfy our emotions.

The distinction between *sympathy* and *empathy* is deliberately ignored, even by people who know better, like the editors of *Time*. Sympathy is the ability to commiserate with someone who is different from ourselves: it always includes the element of pity; empathy is the ability to commiserate with someone like ourselves: the element of identification is always present.

Obviously, sympathy requires more effort and hence is the greater virtue, but we have cast it into outer darkness and "empathize" with everybody under the sun. In our rush to gild the lily of apology we have convinced ourselves that "empathize" sounds more sympathetic, but in truth we are



"Before we learned to walk upright, I never realized you had such nice legs."

afraid of the implied insult in sympathy. "Pity," wrote Mary McCarthy, "signifies a conquered repugnance."

The word games of Tender Hooks are producing an increasingly ungrounded, insubstantial personality type. How many people can you identify with before giving "you are what you eat" new meaning?

The whole country has a bone in the throat—the real cause of our much-touted "stress." As Boris Pasternak noted in *Dr. Zhivago*: "Health is ruined by the systematic duplicity forced on people if you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike and rejoice at what brings you nothing but misfortune."

Tender Hooks will not keep the peace. "Why are you always saying you're sorry?" is, after all, the signature line of the wife beater.

—FLORENCE KING

Miss King's latest book is With Charity Toward None *(St. Martin's Press).*

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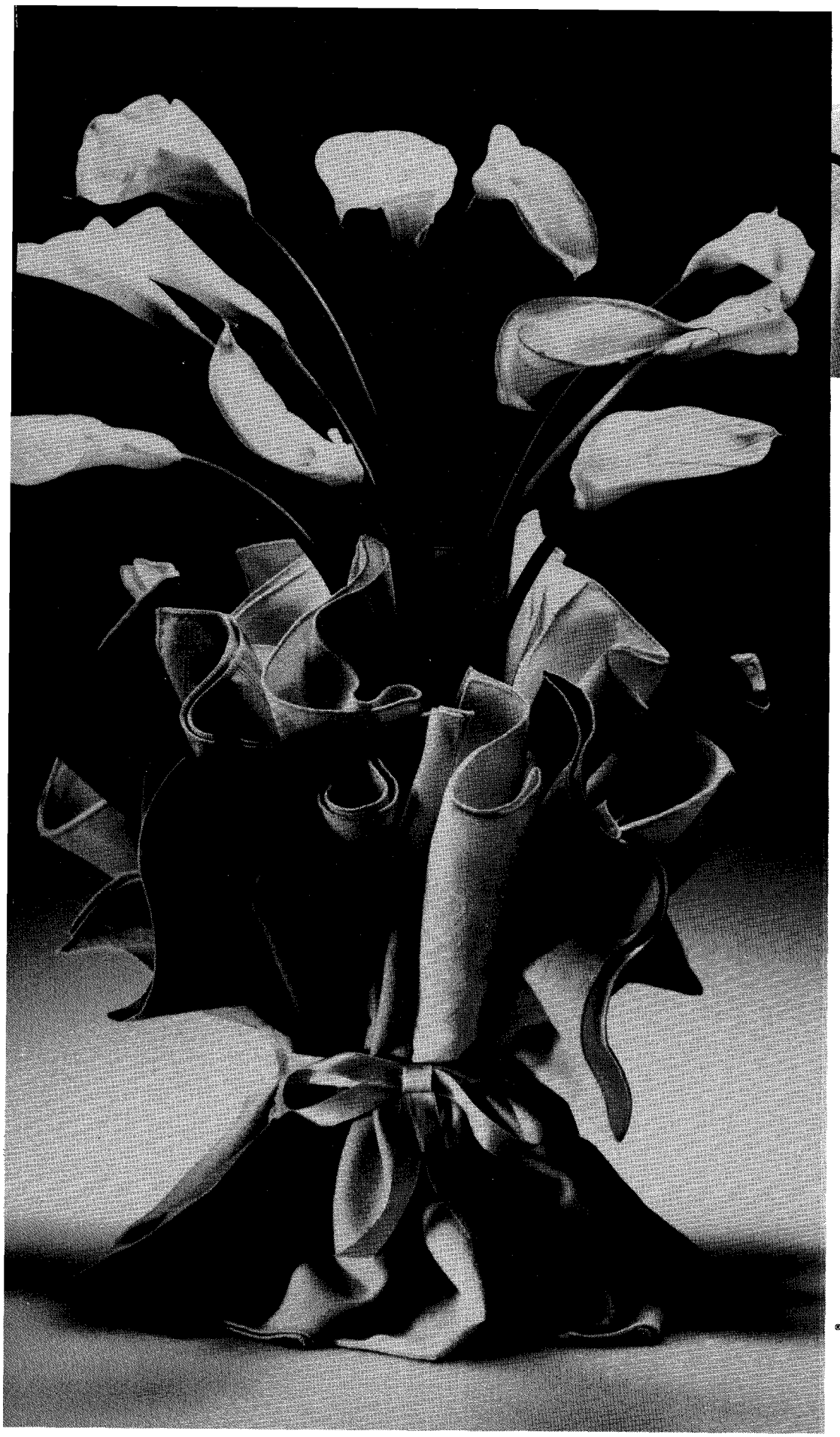

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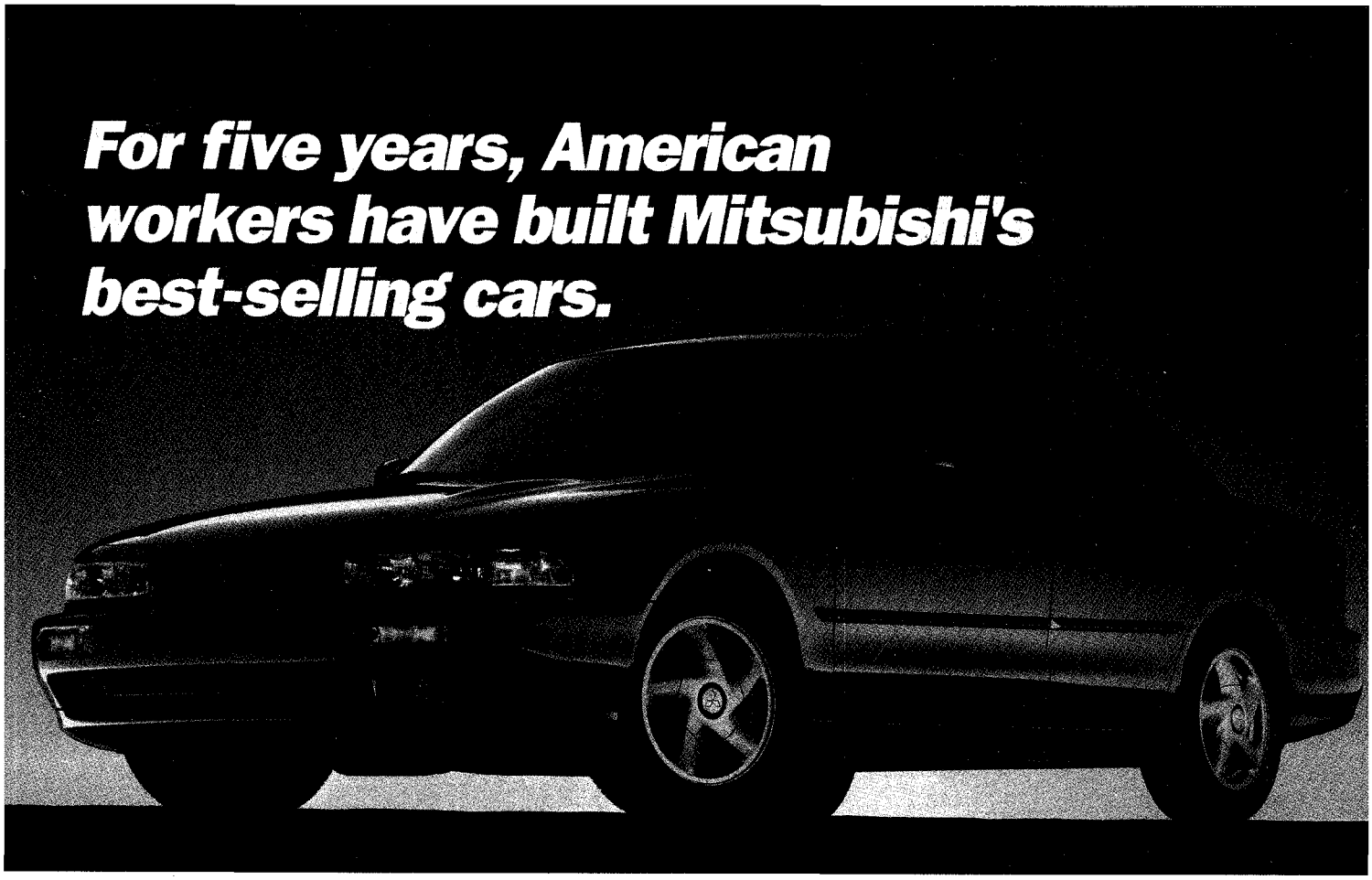

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